Your Comprehensive Guide To

Outdoor Plants

Perfect plants for every region

How to plant, trim, and nurture

No-hassle watering systems

Great tips to keep pests at bay

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Everything you need to build and maintain the backyard oasis you've always dreamed of!

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” –Audrey Hepburn

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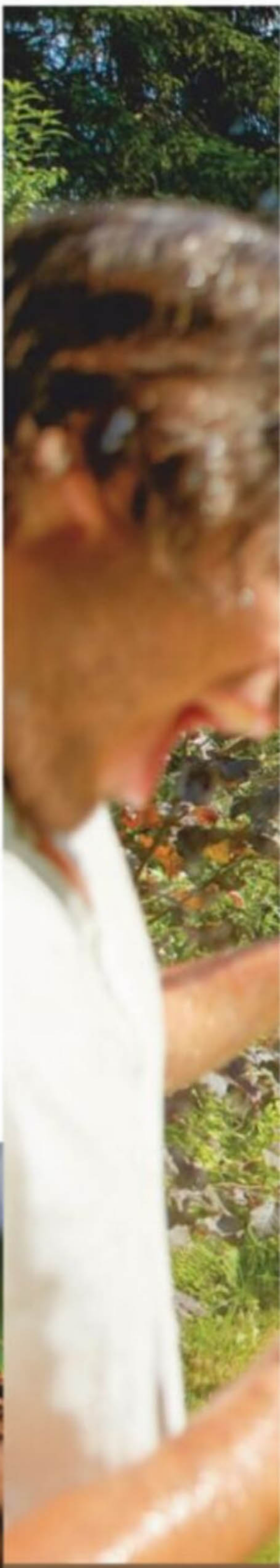

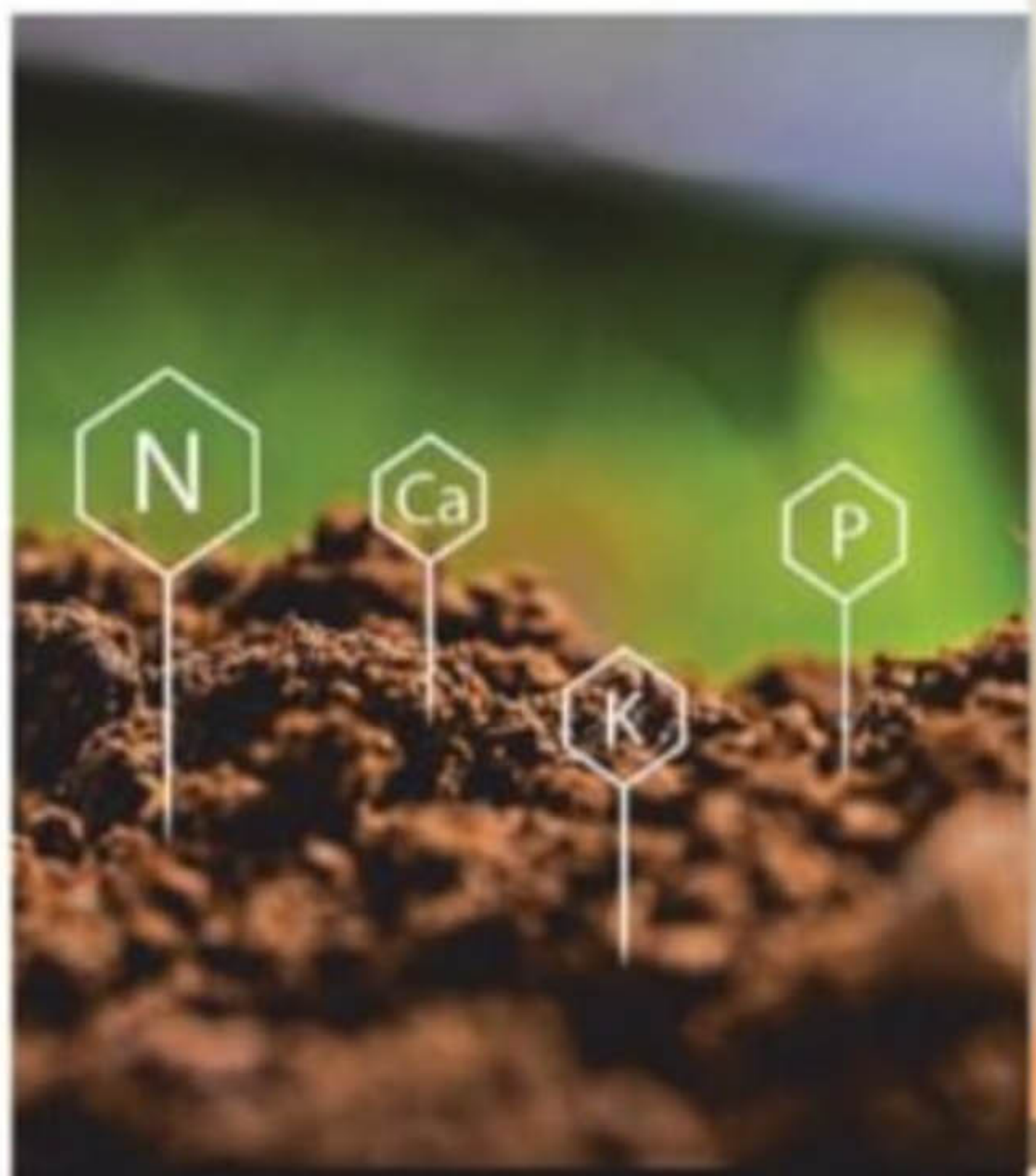

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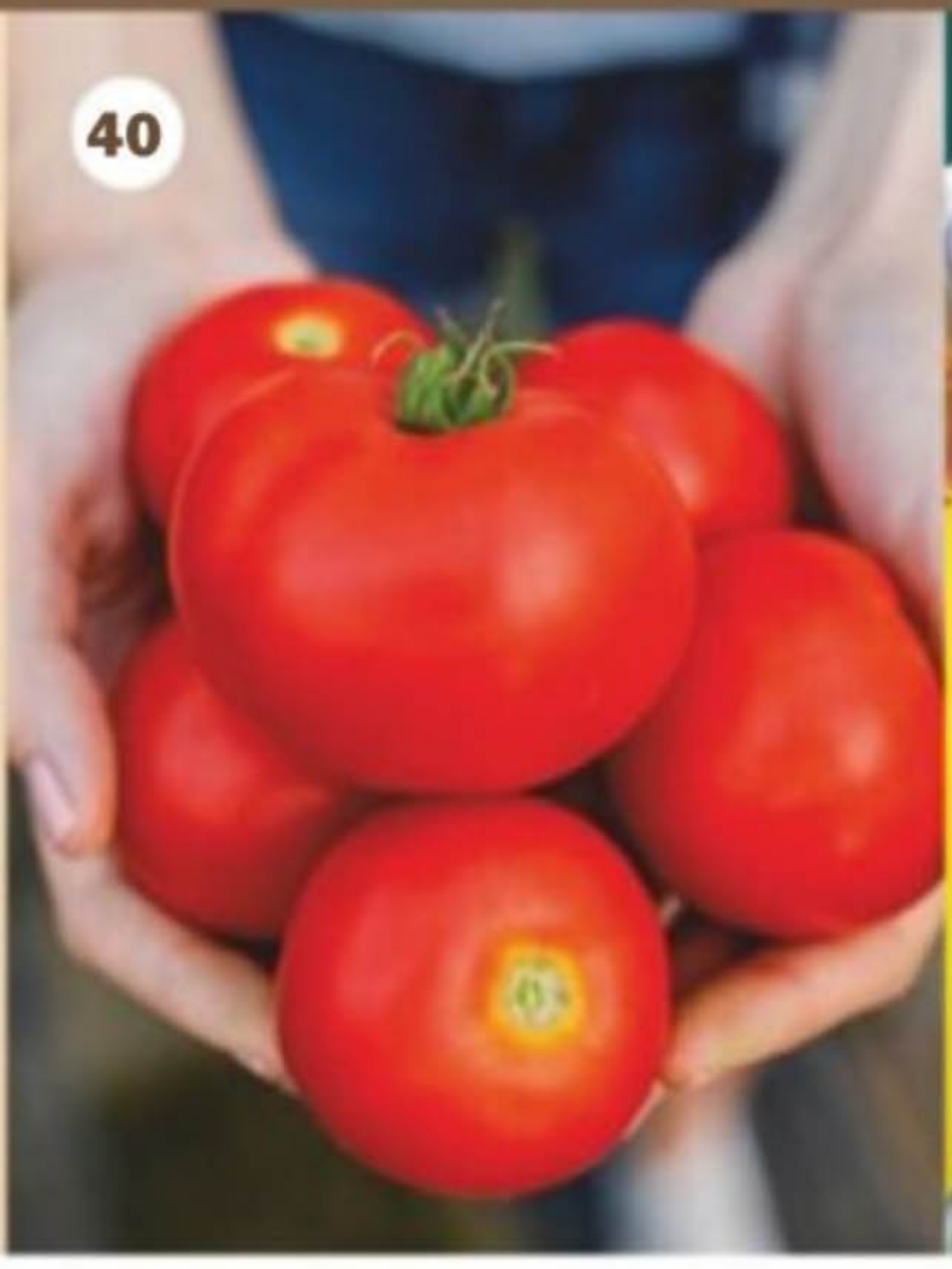

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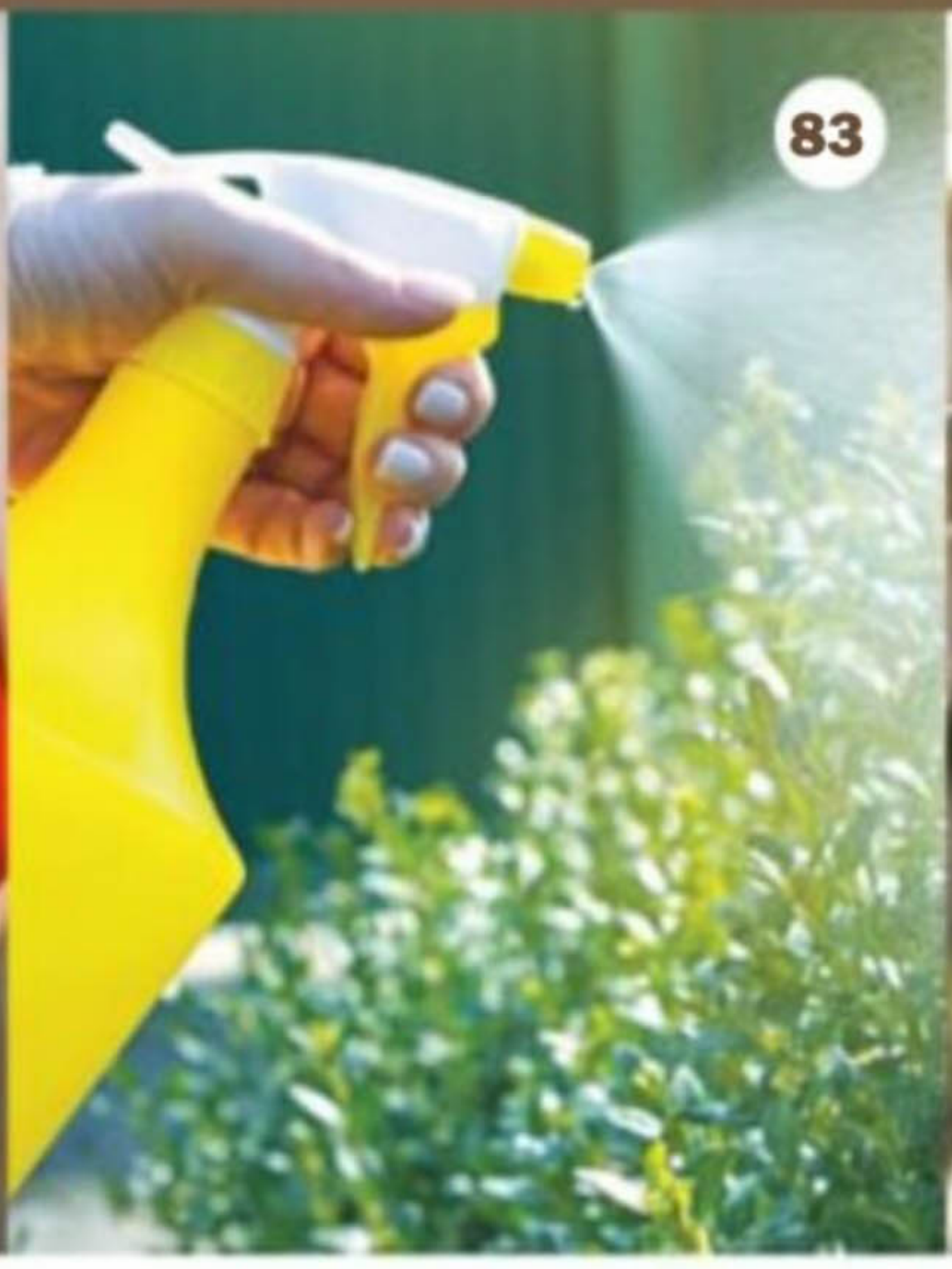

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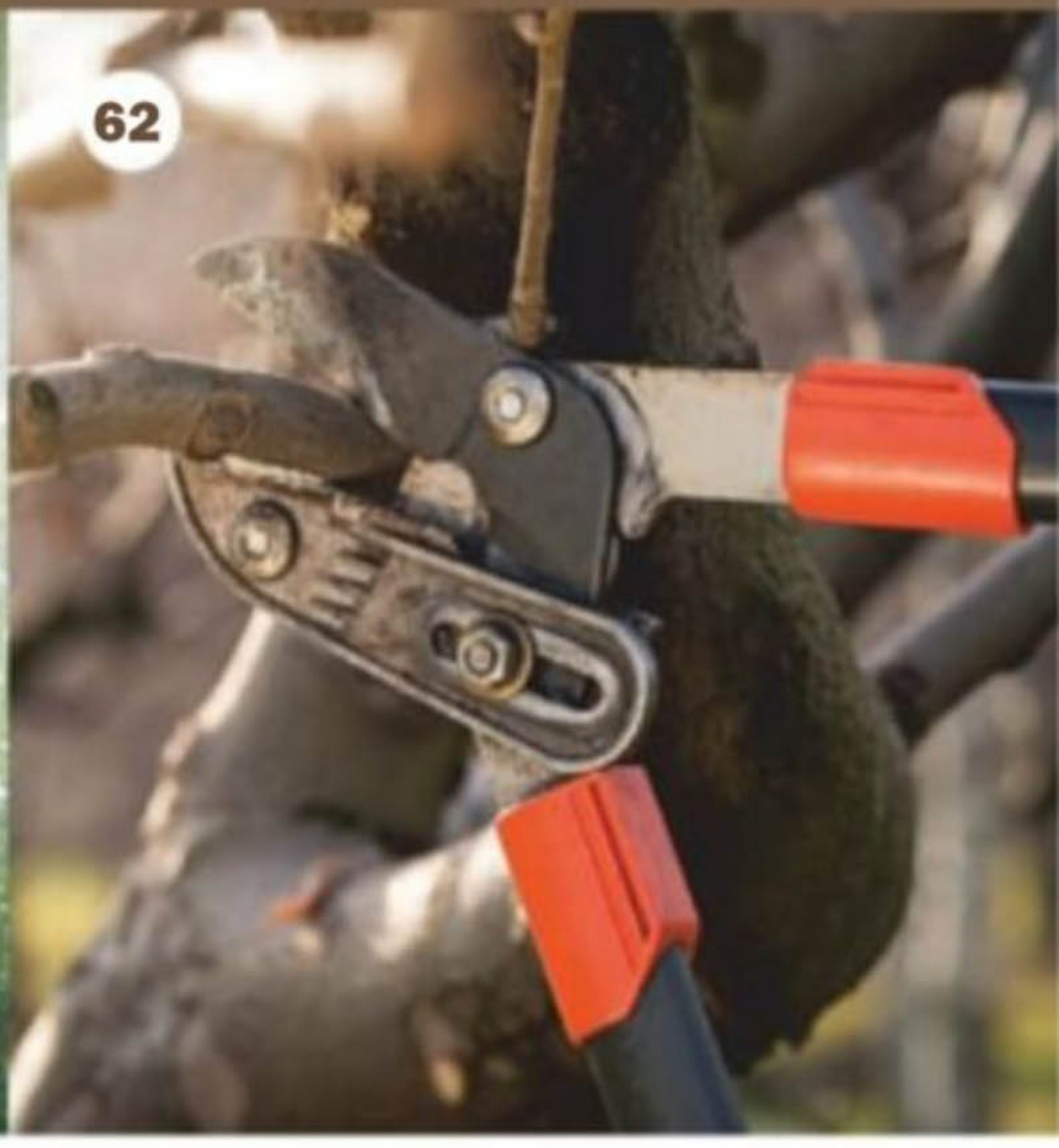

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Many beautiful varieties of blue leaf hostas are a great choice for shady spots in your yard.

Become a Master of the Art of Gardening

The green-thumb guide to turning your yard into a natural paradise

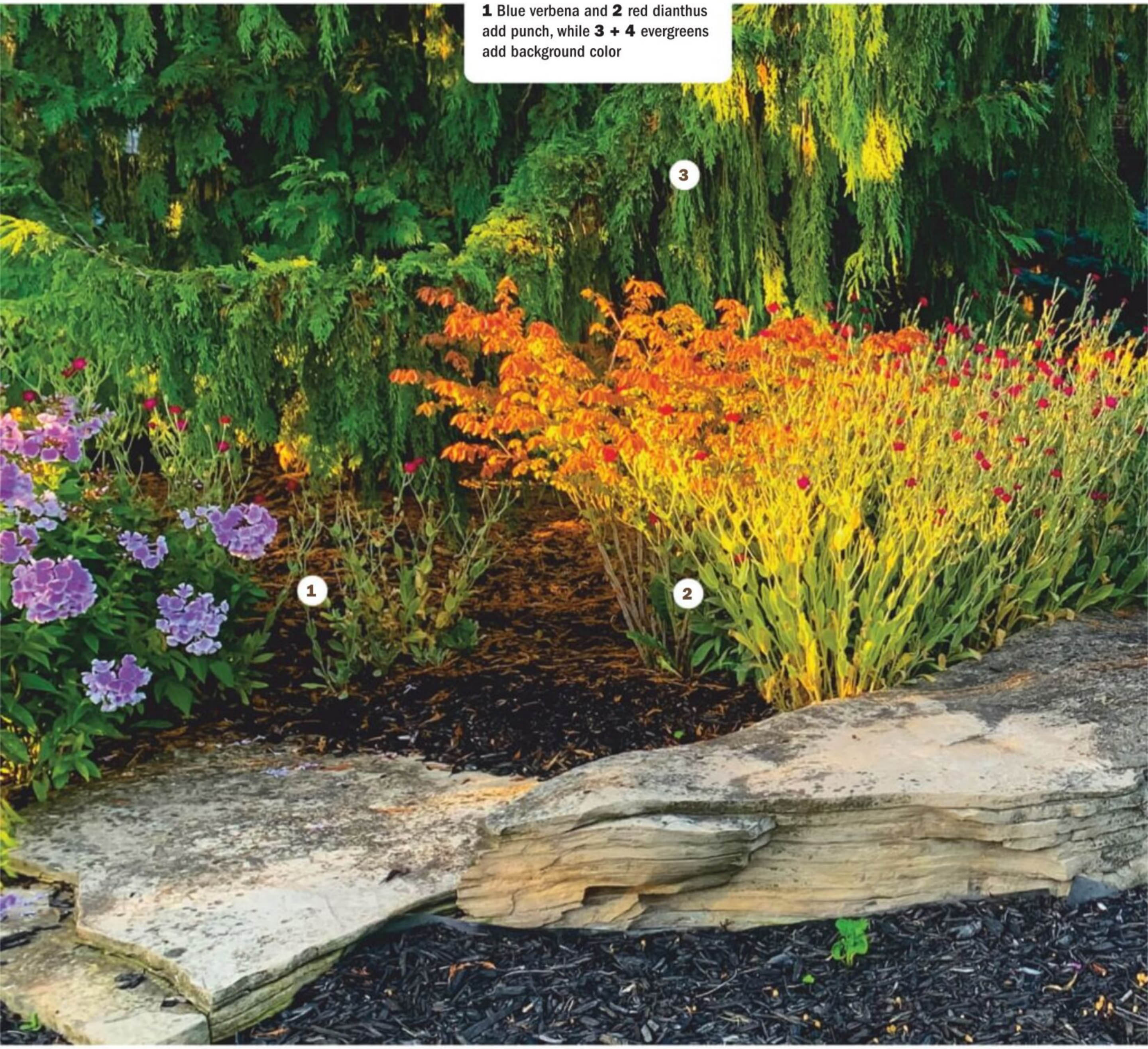
There's something undeniably captivating about a beautifully kept garden—a little piece of paradise right at your very own doorstep. We've all walked past that one neighbor's yard filled with lush greenery, blooming flowers, and perfectly manicured trees, and wondered how they do it. Now, you can learn all the expert tips and tricks for yourself.

Whether you have a sprawling backyard or a small patch of grass, you can create a welcoming home for flowers, shrubs, and vegetables—and even wildlife—with this in-depth guide. Inside, you'll find everything you need to get inspired, get started, and grow a green thumb, from gentle motivation to detailed step-by-step instructions. Learn how to identify plants that are likely to thrive in your area, arm yourself with smart planting and watering techniques, and learn the secrets behind creating rich and fertile soil that allows your plants to thrive. Flip through pages of stunning landscapes to spark ideas for your own garden design. Dive into plant parenthood as you learn how to keep your greenery healthy and vibrant with weed and pest control, disease prevention, and everyday maintenance. You'll even learn how to go from plant to plate, creating a lush, bountiful vegetable garden.

The rewards of home gardening are great—and proven! Over the years, dozens of studies have shown that gardening is good for us: it offers healthy low-impact exercise, reduces stress and improves mood, boosts the immune system and lowers heart rate, is associated with a lower risk of dementia, and may speed up healing. Gardening also does wonders for our sense of accomplishment, as you'll soon learn for yourself. Prepare yourself for delightful surprises—cherish moments when a once-tiny seedling shoots up into a blooming flower or when your first tomatoes burst with incredible flavor throughout the sun-kissed days of summer.

So whether you already have a garden that just needs some TLC or you're a beginner embarking on a new adventure, this guide is designed for you. Say goodbye to garden envy—get ready to roll up your sleeves, dig in the dirt, and let your imagination go. Soon, you'll have all the know-how to transform your outdoor space into a thriving oasis.

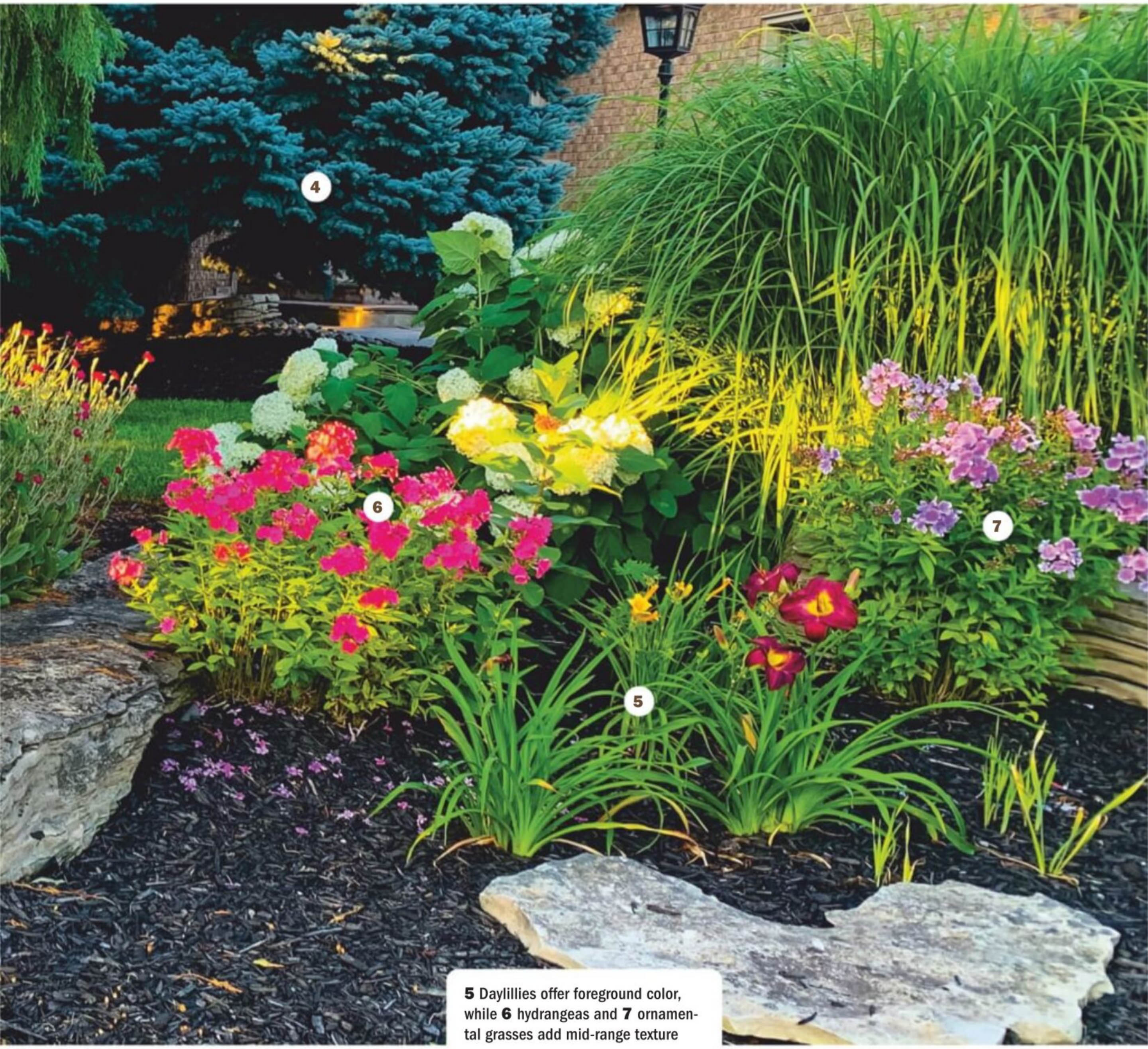
Gardening is good exercise, and exposes you to healthy fresh air.



1 Blue verbena and **2** red dianthus add punch, while **3 + 4** evergreens add background color

Envisioning Your Oasis

Plant the seeds of success today and you'll enjoy your garden for years to come.

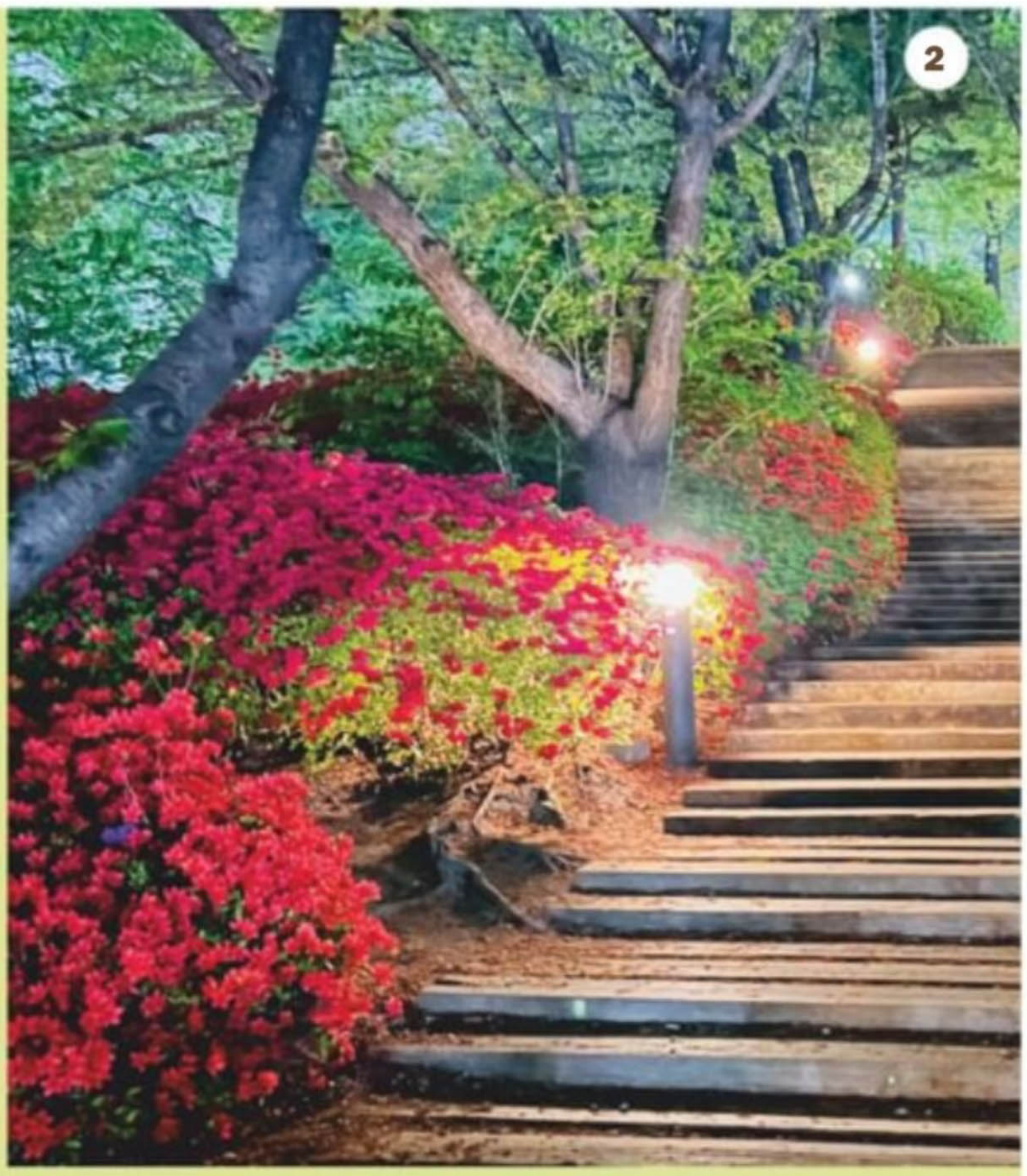


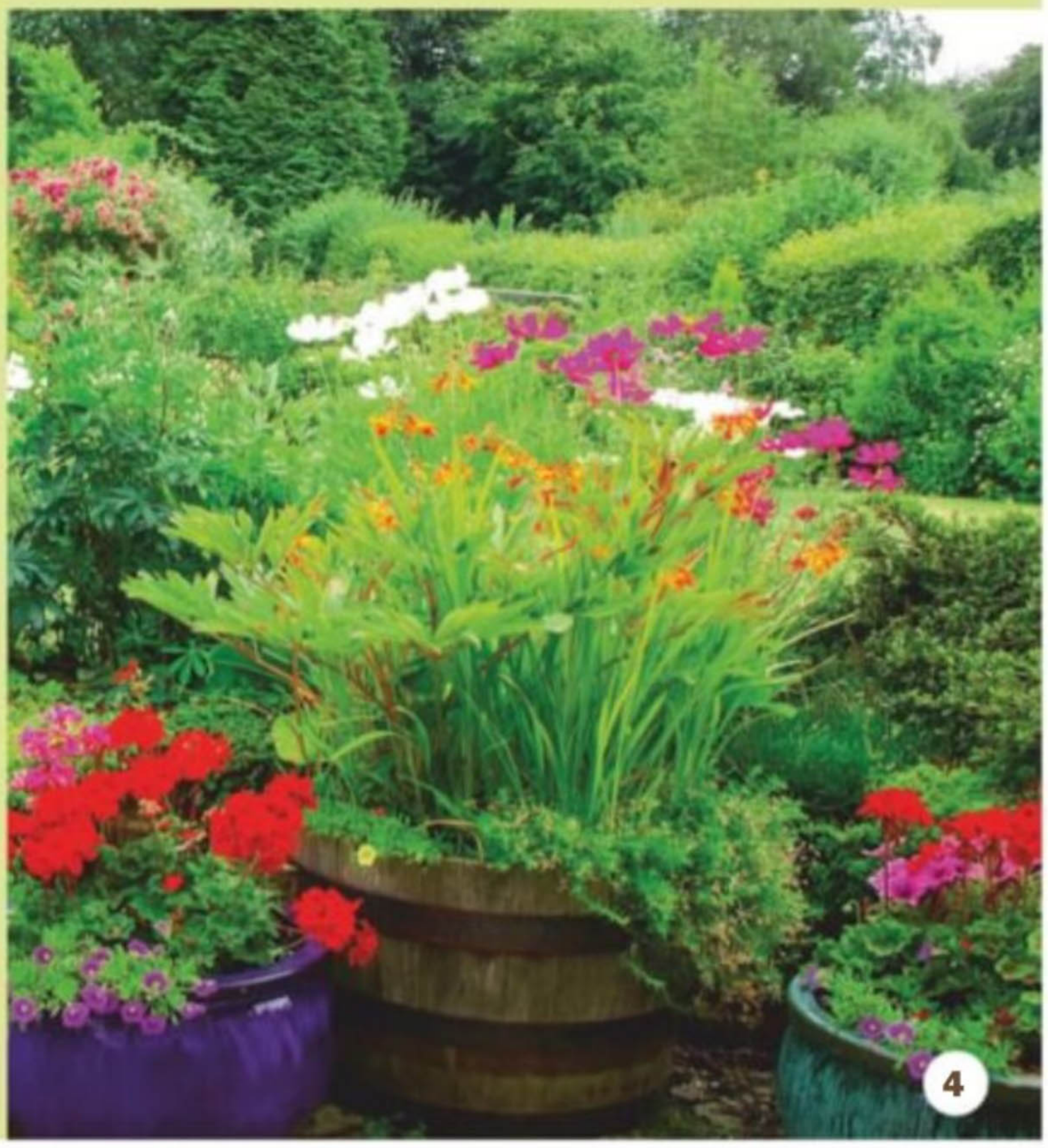
5 Daylillies offer foreground color, while **6** hydrangeas and **7** ornamental grasses add mid-range texture

Imagine building a house without a blueprint or a sturdy framework—chances are, your home would experience some problems down the line. Similarly, preparing your garden sets the stage for success and ensures that your efforts yield bountiful rewards. By carefully choosing plants that are well-suited to your location, understanding factors like your soil and climate, and gearing up with the right tools, you can create an environment where plants thrive and flourish, add beauty to your home year-round, and craft a sanctuary that reflects your personal style. The groundwork you lay today will soon blossom into a tapestry of colors, scents, and serenity tomorrow and beyond—so let's get started!

Plan Out Your Garden

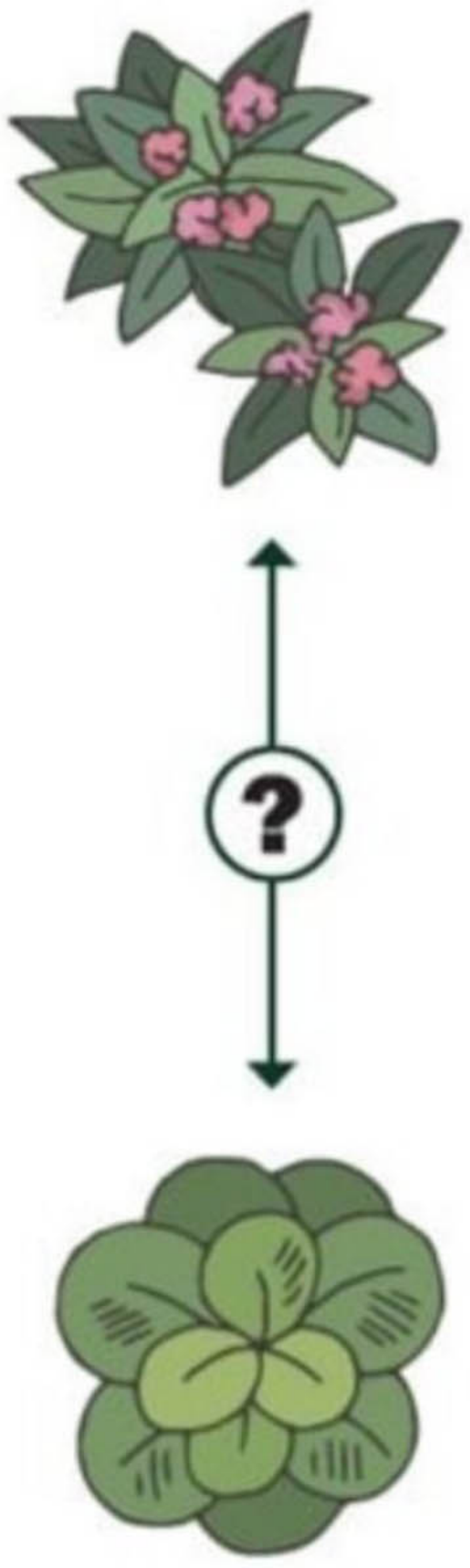
Take your dream backyard from inspiration to reality.





1 Roses are a traditional arch topper **2** Flame azalea line stairs with blooms **3** Red geraniums and roses **4** Geraniums and petunias are classic pot pairs

Adding color to your garden plans will help you envision the space as a whole.

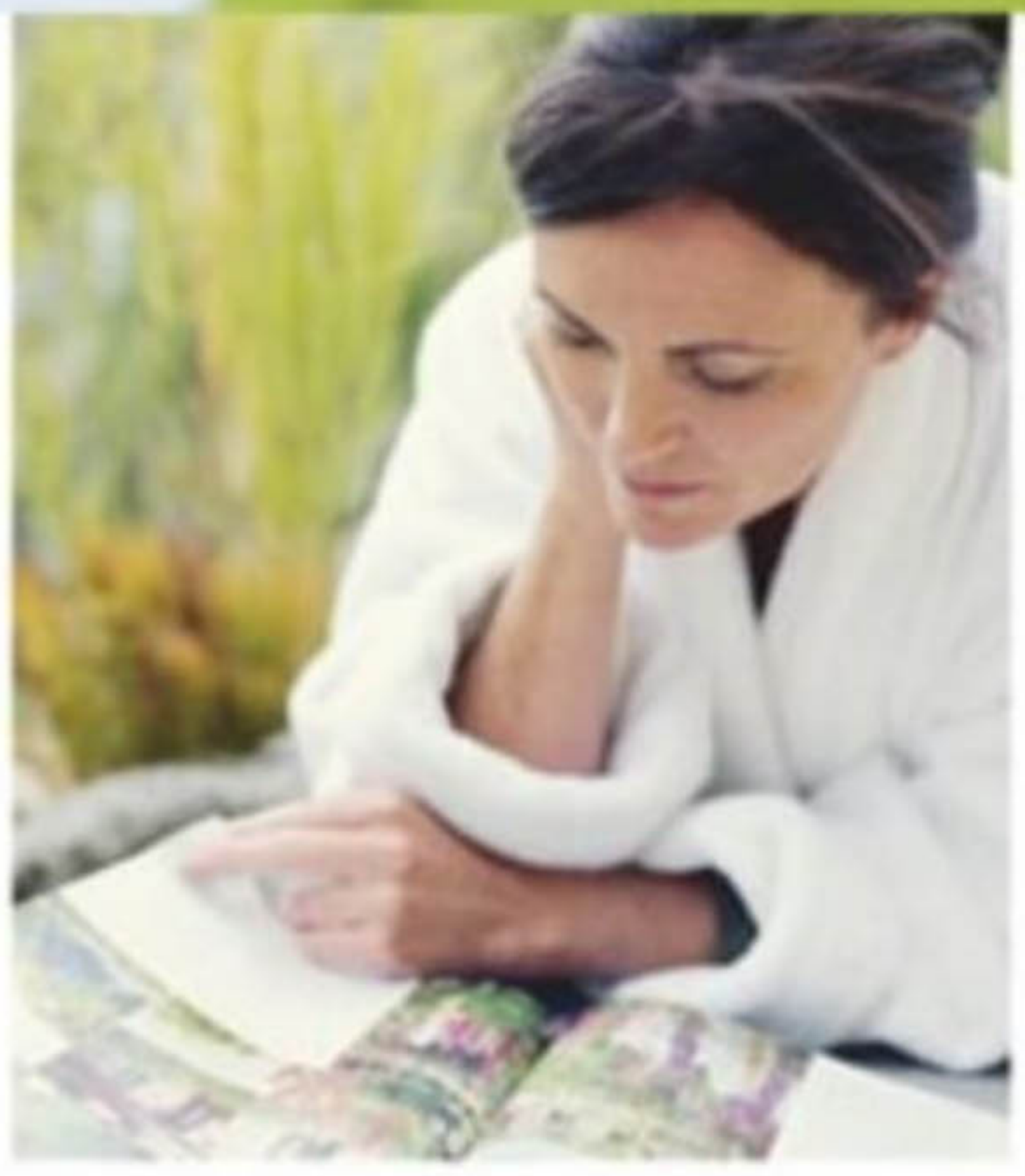


Consider the spacing between each full-grown plant when designing.

With proper planning, patience, and an eye for beautiful design, you can create an enchanting garden that thrives through every season. The garden of your dreams is within your grasp—let it bloom!

Get Inspired

Begin by immersing yourself in garden inspiration—use gardening and home improvement magazines and online resources like Pinterest to gather photos of gardens you love. As you gather your images, pay attention to recurring elements like color schemes, plant textures, and architectural features that catch your eye. Consider how each of these elements can be incorporated into your own garden space. The goal isn't to replicate someone else's garden, but rather to use these resources as a springboard for your own creativity and develop a clear idea of what you want your garden to look like.



Do Your Research

Take a closer look at the elements of those gardens that caught your attention. Identify the plants, flowers, and foliage that captivated you most and make note of the following factors:

Seasonal Variety: Different plants bloom and look their best at various times throughout the year. Be sure to choose a mix of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and shrubs with a range of blooming schedules for vibrant colors and visual interest all year round.

Space Requirements: Knowing the growing habits of plants, including height, width, and spacing requirements, will help prevent overcrowding and ensure that each of your plants has ample room to shine.

Care Needs: Identify the plants that are well-suited to thrive in your specific conditions. Consider their water requirements, preferred pH levels, and tolerance to temperature fluctuations.

Start Drawing

Grab a pencil, ruler, and eraser for this part—it's time to unleash your inner landscape architect to create a scaled layout of your garden space. Start by choosing plants that match the essential elements of your space, like the soil type (see page 12), regional climate, and available sunlight. Use your earlier notes on their water requirements, preferred pH levels, and tolerance to temperature fluctuations to sketch out your layout, ensuring plants are strategically placed to optimize their growth and health.

Experiment

Once you've taken care of the plants and areas of your yard that have the most restrictions, you can let your creativity soar wherever you have flexibility. Play around with various arrangements, pathways, and focal points to create a visually appealing and harmonious garden space. Consider incorporating unique features like trellises, water features, or decorative containers to the foliage to add extra interest and personality.

Flowering bulbs like tulips provide a short-term but stunning burst of color each year.

Understand Your Soil

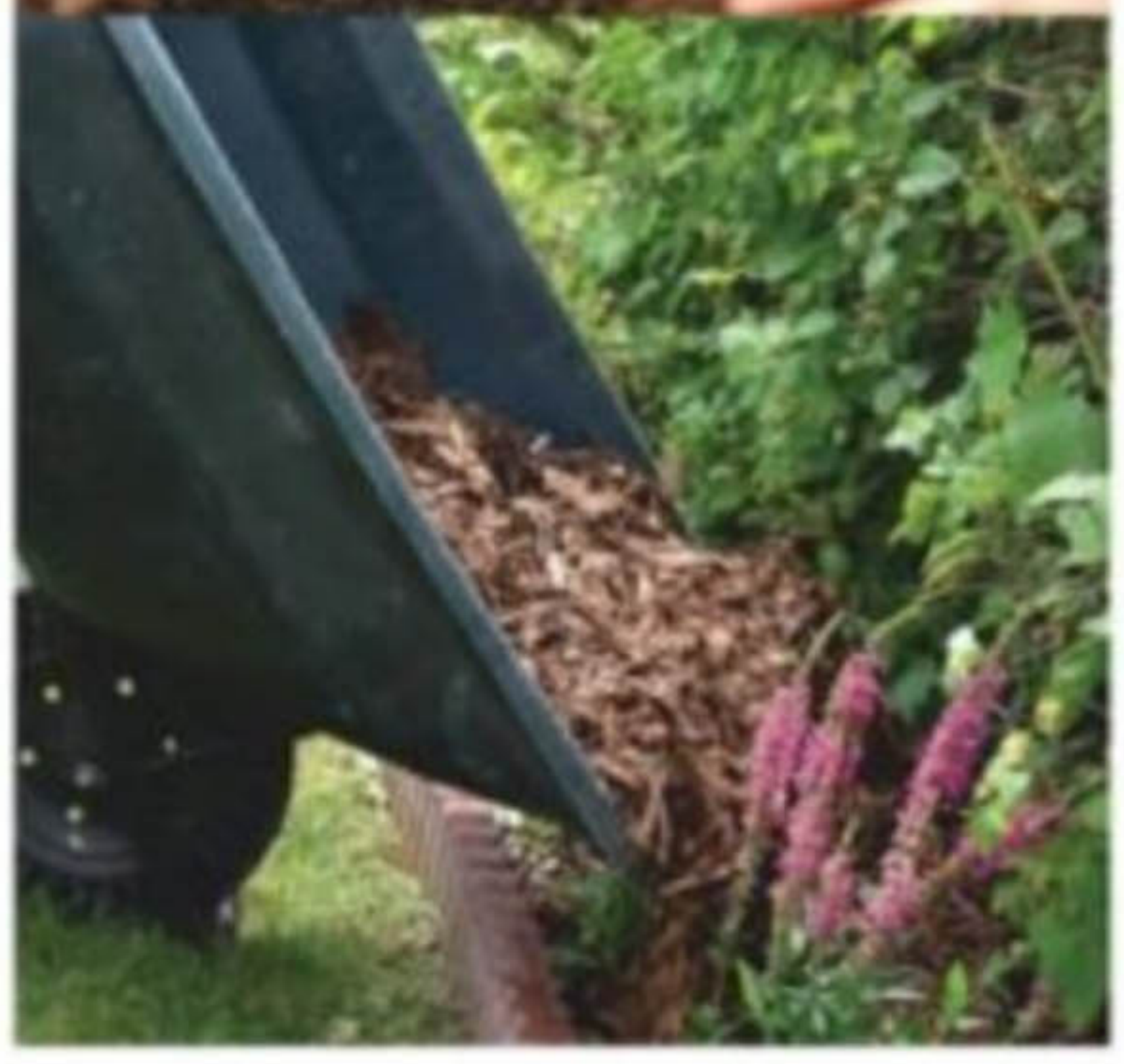
It's the dirty secret to a flourishing garden.

Studies have found that direct skin contact with soil boosts your physical and mental health.

Your natural topsoil can vary dramatically depending on where you live, so understanding and adapting to your specific garden's soil is essential for its ability to thrive. With a bit of planning and maintenance, you can achieve spectacular results without fighting against nature.

1. Test: First things first, you should test your soil to understand its texture, acidity, and nutrients. You can purchase a soil testing kit from your local garden center or even send a sample to a professional lab. The ideal time to conduct a soil test is early spring or late fall when the soil is not frozen and has had time to settle after any major disturbances. Avoid testing during periods of extreme weather conditions, such as heavy rainfall or drought, as these can affect the accuracy of the results.

Test your soil for various nutrients to see if you'll need to supplement it with anything.



2. Tweak: Depending on the results of your soil test, various modifications may be necessary to cater to your plants' preferences. Some of the most popular soil amendments are:

Compost: Rich in nutrients and organic matter, compost improves soil fertility, moisture retention, and aeration.

Aged Manure: Animal manure (preferably from cows or horses) adds nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil, enhancing plant growth.

Peat Moss: Excellent for water retention, peat moss is especially useful for sandy soils that tend to dry out quickly.

Lime: If your soil is too acidic (low pH), applying calcitic lime will help neutralize it (this type of lime is also less likely to prompt a magnesium deficiency).

Sulfur: If your soil is too alkaline (high pH), sulfur can help bring it back down to a more neutral level.

Wood Chips: These help suppress weeds, moderate soil temperature, retain moisture, and slowly release nutrients into the soil as they decompose.

DRY
WET
ALKALINE
ACIDIC
PH
PH·MOISTURE METER

3. Monitor: To stay on top of your soil's maintenance needs, establish a routine of regular observation. Take note of:

Plant Changes: If your plant's health or growth patterns seem to be "off" from what you're used to, these can indicate underlying issues with the soil.

Moisture Levels: Use a moisture meter or simply check the soil's moisture content by feeling it with your fingers. Adjust your watering schedule accordingly to keep the soil at the right moisture for your specific plants.

Weed Growth: Weeds compete with your plants for nutrients and resources, so it's important to stay on top of weed management.

4. Maintain: Supplementing your soil on a regular schedule ensures that your plants receive the necessary nutrients throughout each stage of their life cycle. It's a good idea to add fresh soil or nutrient-rich mulch in the springtime every year and then continue to keep an eye on the soil's condition throughout the season.

Start a compost bin with your leftover vegetable scraps to benefit your garden.

Adapt to Your Climate

Get on Mother Nature's good side to keep your plants healthy and happy.

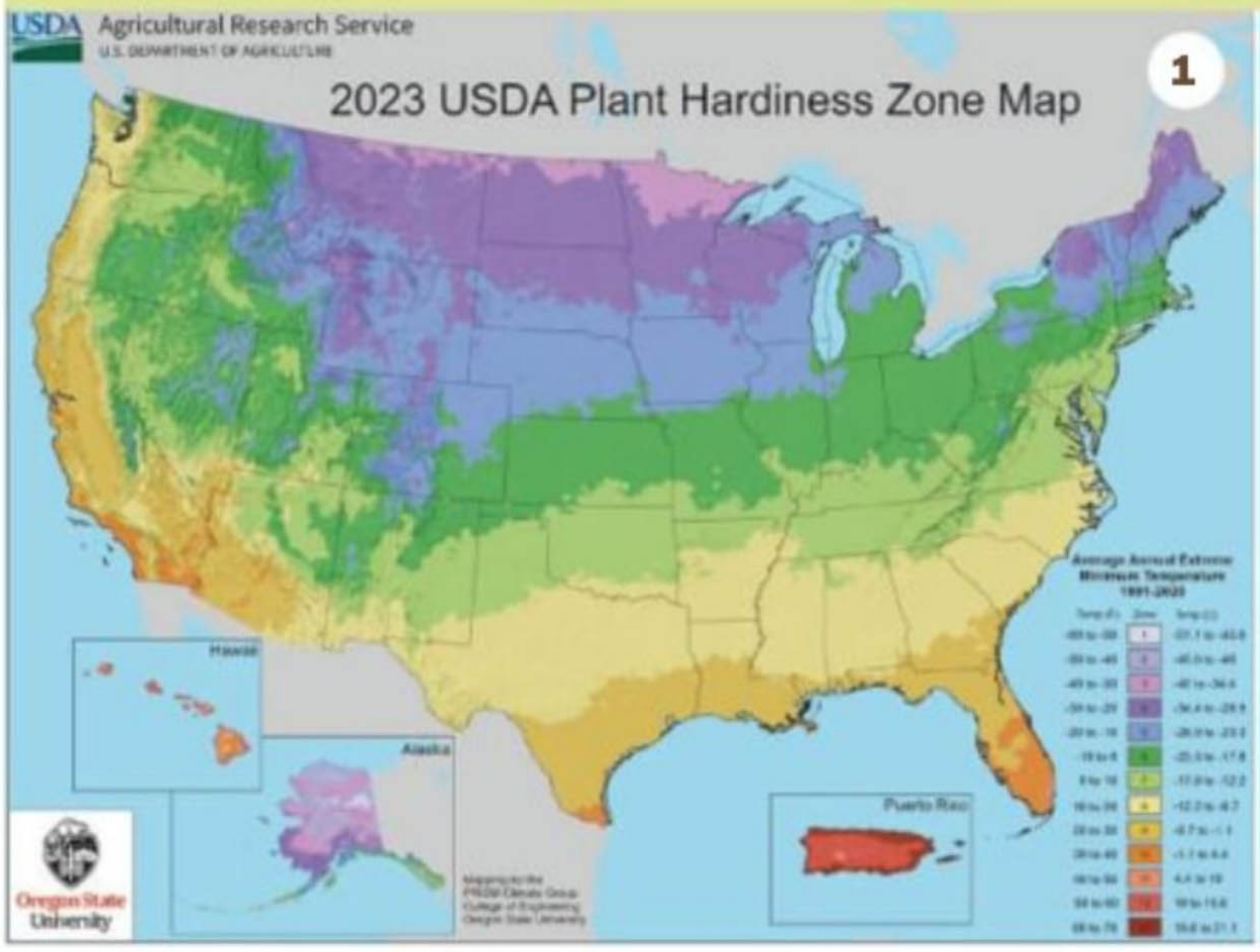
An early frost can be a heartbreaker if you don't pick plants that can handle your climate.

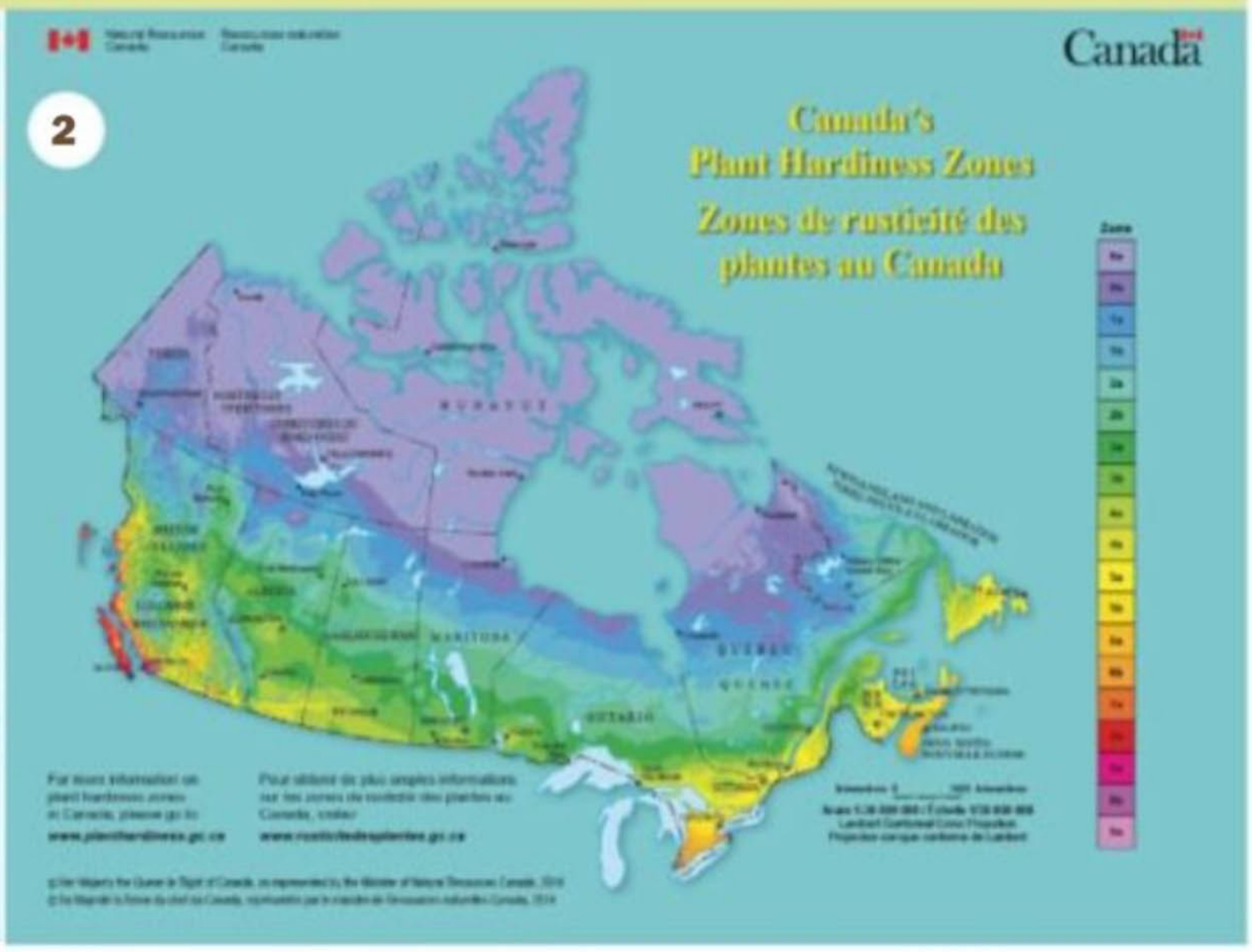
Average Annual Extreme Minimum Temperature 1976-2005

Temp (F)	Zone	Temp (C)
-60 to -50	1	-51.1 to -45.6
-50 to -40	2	-45.6 to -40
-40 to -30	3	-40 to -34.4
-30 to -20	4	-34.4 to -28.9
-20 to -10	5	-28.9 to -23.3
-10 to 0	6	-23.3 to -17.8
0 to 10	7	-17.8 to -12.2
10 to 20	8	-12.2 to -6.7
20 to 30	9	-6.7 to -1.1
30 to 40	10	-1.1 to 4.4
40 to 50	11	4.4 to 10
50 to 60	12	10 to 15.6
60 to 70	13	15.6 to 21.1

Know how your area's hardiness zone (see facing page) may affect your plants

The most important climate consideration for most plants is the amount and frequency of water.


USDA Agricultural Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map
1
Hawaii
Alaska
Puerto Rico
Oregon State University


Canada
2
Canada's Plant Hardiness Zones
Zones de rusticité des plantes au Canada

1 To view an intereactive version of the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone hardiness map, visit: planthardiness.ars.usda.gov

2 For more information on plant hardiness zones in Canada, visit http://planthardiness.gc.ca/

Understanding your climate will help your garden grow strong and healthy, no matter where you live. Get familiar with the following information in your local area and you'll be conversing with Mother Nature in no time.

Rain and Snow: The first step in mastering your garden's climate is learning about the weather in your area. Research your region's average annual rainfall and snowfall capacity—you can find this information on government websites for your local area. Rainfall measurements will indicate how much water your plants are likely to receive naturally during the growing season, while snowfall data will tell you whether they'll have much-needed soil moisture to spark spring growth.

Temperature: Knowing the average temperatures throughout the year will help you select plants that are well-suited to your area's temperature range. Temperature also affects seed germination, plant growth rate, flowering, fruit set, photosynthesis, stress response, and plant hardiness. Understanding the average temperature fluctuations between seasons will help determine when to start planting, when to expect peak growth, and when to prepare for colder or hotter conditions.

Frost: Understanding when temperatures may dip below freezing will help you determine what and when you plant. Frosts can damage tender plants not adapted to withstand ice crystals inside their cells. To make planning simpler, utilize average first and last frost dates for your region to ensure plants won't be affected too early in spring or too late in autumn.

Growing Season Length: This span of frost-free days dictates which summer-loving plants will survive long enough to bear fruit or flower. Live in a region with a shorter growing season? Consider quicker-maturing crops, or extend your garden's growing season by using greenhouses, cold frames, or row covers.

Hardiness Zone: To navigate your region's climate, it's essential to know your local Plant Hardiness Zone. This system divides North America into zones based on their minimum winter temperatures, helping you select plants that can endure your region's unique conditions. You can find your hardiness zone using interactive maps available online or by consulting with regional gardening experts. Take a look at the guide starting on page 16 to dig into additional region-specific advice.

Microclimates: Believe it or not, different parts of your property may even have contrasting microclimates. Exploring these variations will enable you to plant species that might not typically thrive in your general region, but could prosper within protected nooks of your yard. Take note of shaded areas, sunny spots, and areas with wind protection to strategically place plants according to their individual needs.

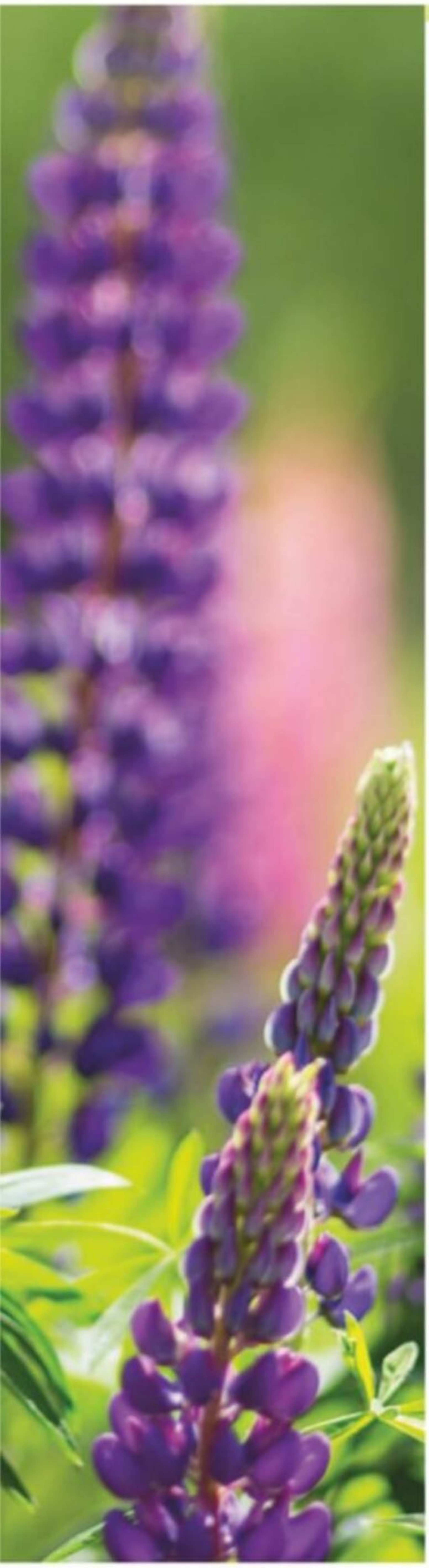
Feeling stuck? Reach out to fellow neighborhood gardeners, visit nearby nurseries or gardening centers, and attend workshops in your area. These resources can offer valuable region-specific advice and support to help your garden flourish.

If your area gets any snowfall, make sure your plants are set up for success to last through it.

Lupines look particularly stunning in a mass, but natural, planting.

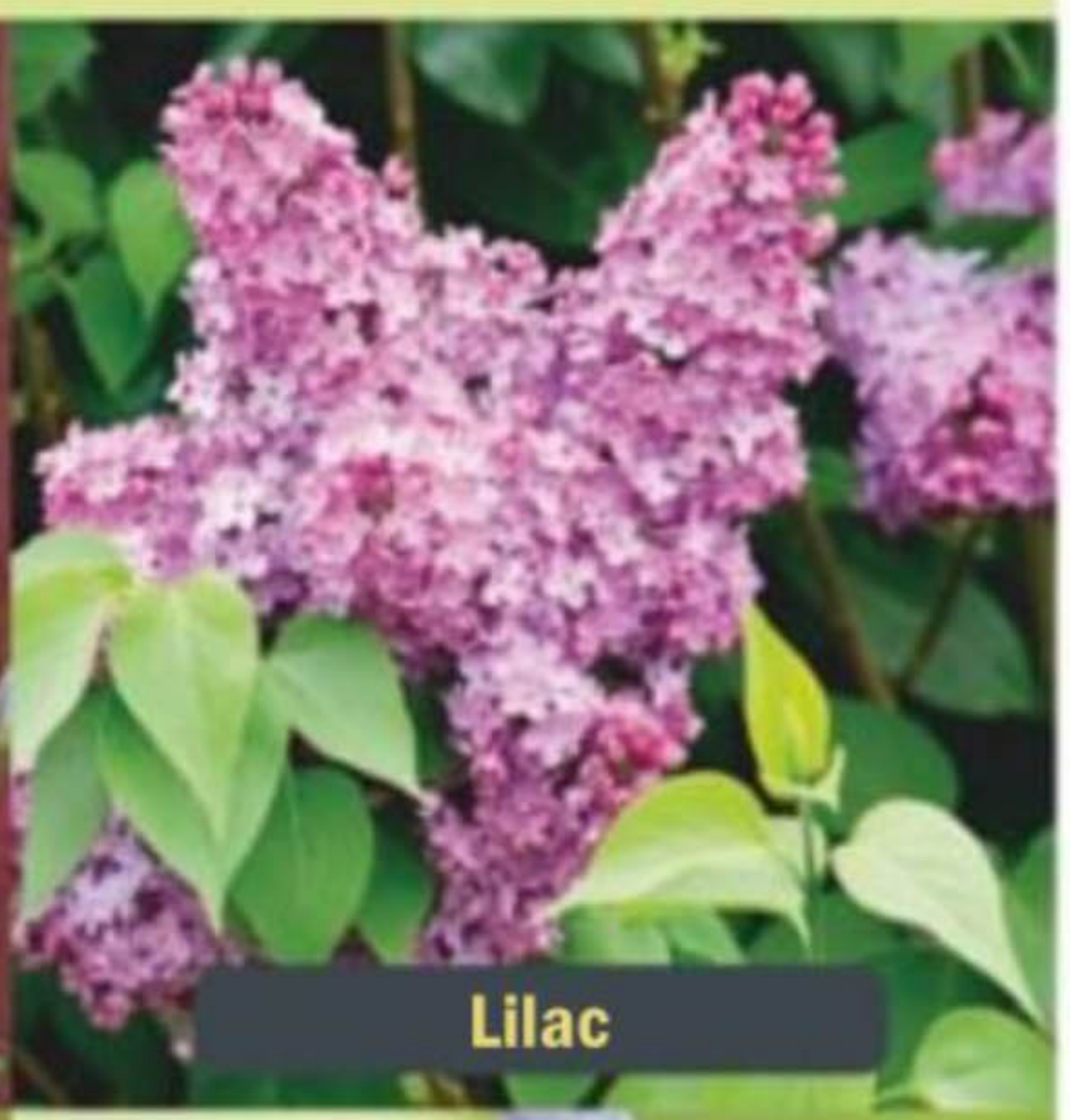
Grow Local

The savvy guide to choosing plants tailored to your region



Creeping Thyme

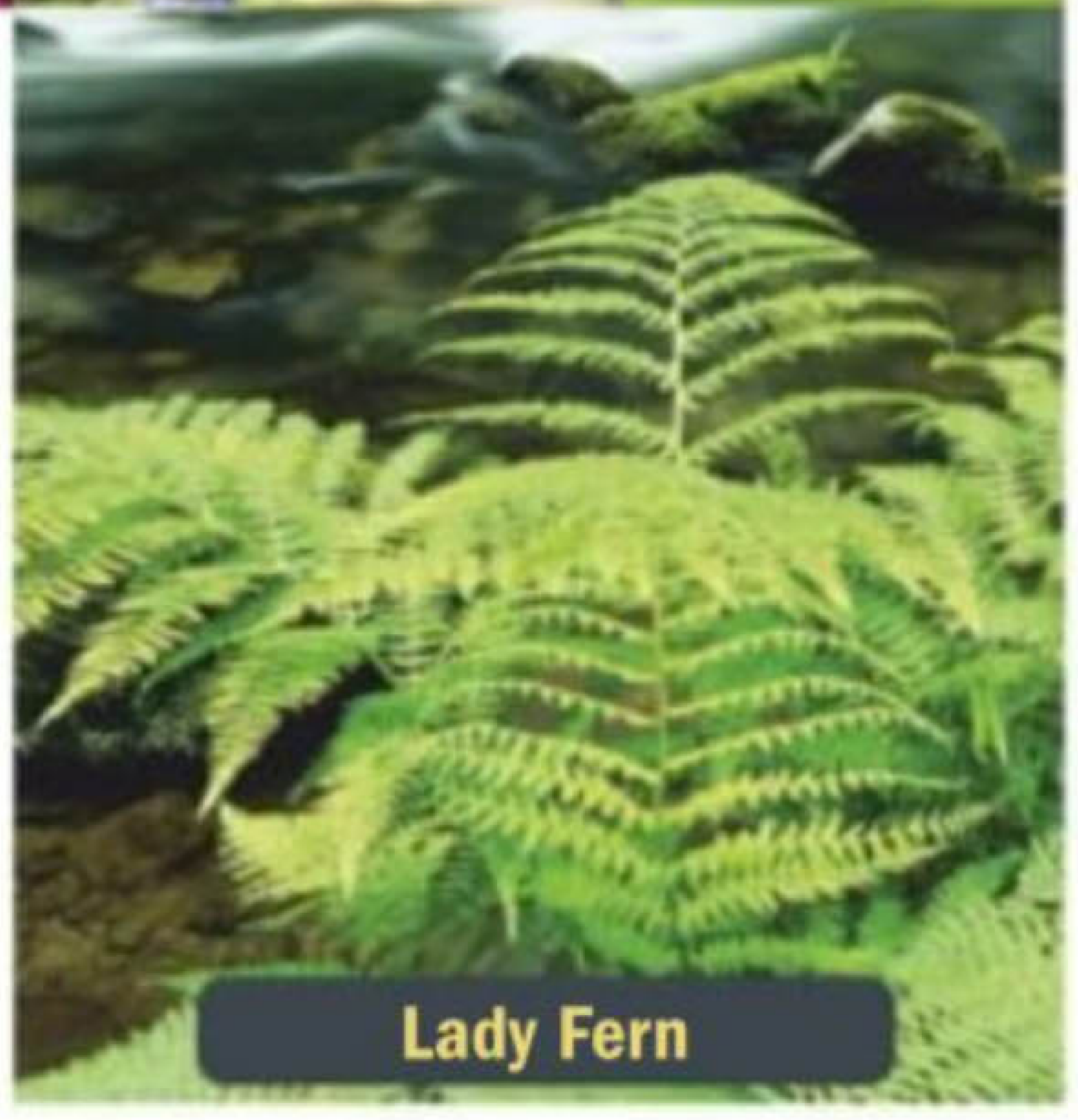
Clematis



Lilac

Coneflower

Jacob's Ladder



Lady Fern

When it comes to choosing plants for a home garden, there's one factor that matters more than anything: where you live. Every area of the world has its own unique climate, soil type, and common pests and diseases. Choosing plants without considering your area would be like wearing flip-flops in the snow or a heavy winter coat at the beach. Just as weather-appropriate attire keeps you comfortable and ready to face the world, selecting regionally appropriate plants sets them up for success in your garden, ready to handle whatever Mother Nature throws their way without your help.

Use this guide to jumpstart your plant research, but make sure to consult local resources—such as social media groups, agricultural organizations, and gardening associations—for more specific advice. For another perspective, look up the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Plant Hardiness Zone Map, which breaks up the country's climates into 13 zones according to an area's lowest extreme temperatures.

North Central

USDA Plant Hardiness

Zones 3-6

This region generally experiences cold winters and has a wide range of hardiness zones, with Zone 3 being the coldest and Zone 6 being relatively milder. However, specific locations within the North Central region may have slightly different hardiness zones due to variations in elevation and specific local climate conditions.

Suggested Plants

- **Creeping Thyme:** This low-growing, flowering perennial herb thrives in the North Central region due to its ability to withstand cold temperatures and adapt to various soil conditions.
- **Clematis:** This climbing vine boasts stunning star-like flowers ranging from white and pink to purple or blue.
- **Coneflower:** Hardy perennials that are native to the prairies of North Central states, they tolerate drought and attract plenty of pollinators with their vibrant daisy-like flowers. They're also known as Echinacea.
- **Lilac:** These flowering shrubs, beloved for their fragrant spring blooms, are well-suited for the North Central region's colder climates.
- **Jacob's Ladder:** This perennial grows densely packed clumps of leaf stems that rise 1-3 feet with hanging clusters of delicate blue, white, pink, or yellow flowers.
- **Lady Fern:** A graceful fern species that thrives in moist soils, its lacy fronds add texture and elegance to shady gardens, making it a popular choice for landscaping.
- **Lupine:** Coming in a range of colors and adapting well to the North Central region's sandy or gravelly soils, its 2-to-3-foot-tall spikes of vibrant flowers attract plenty of butterflies, but crucially not deer or rabbits.

Northeast

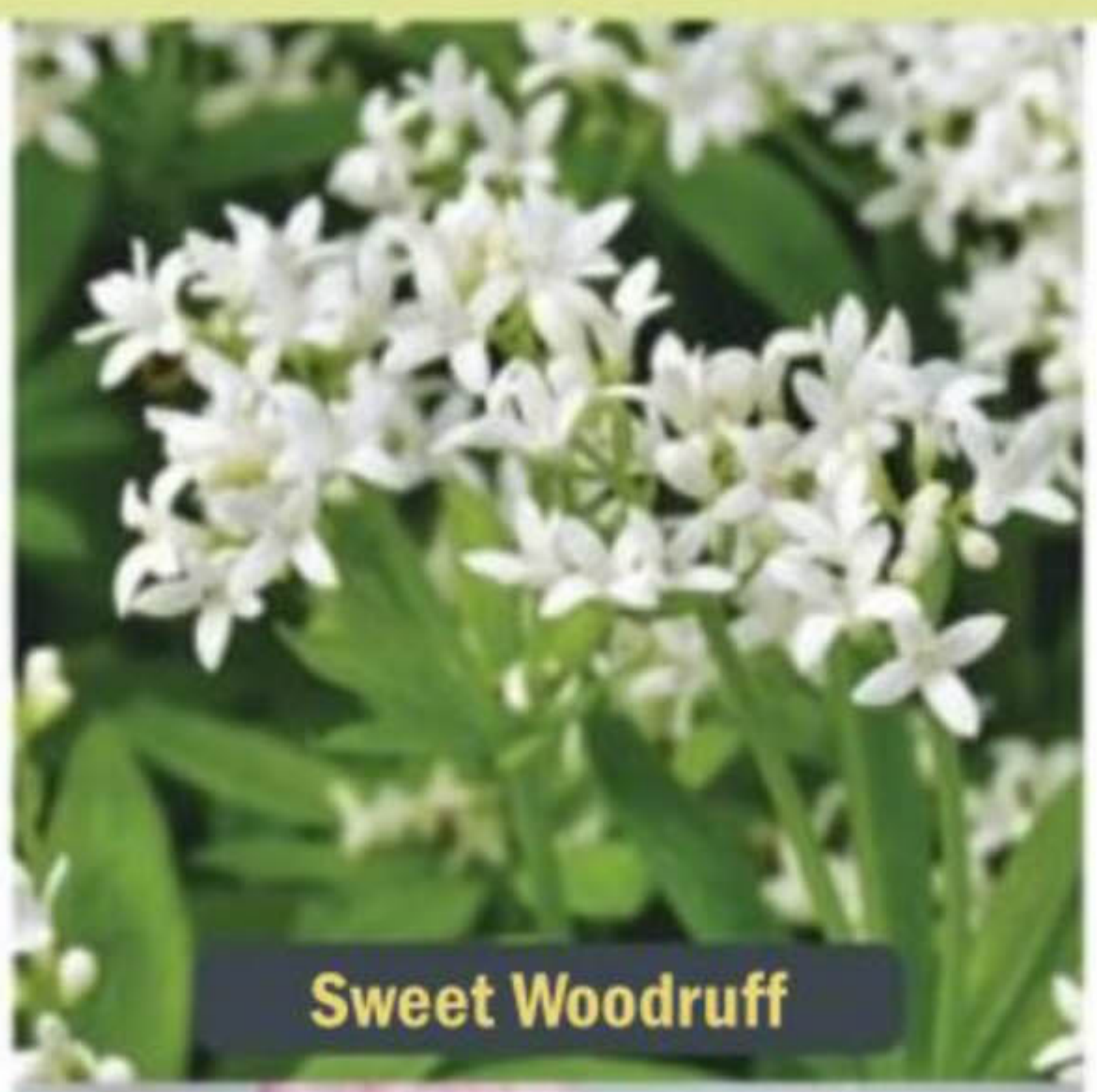
USDA Plant Hardiness

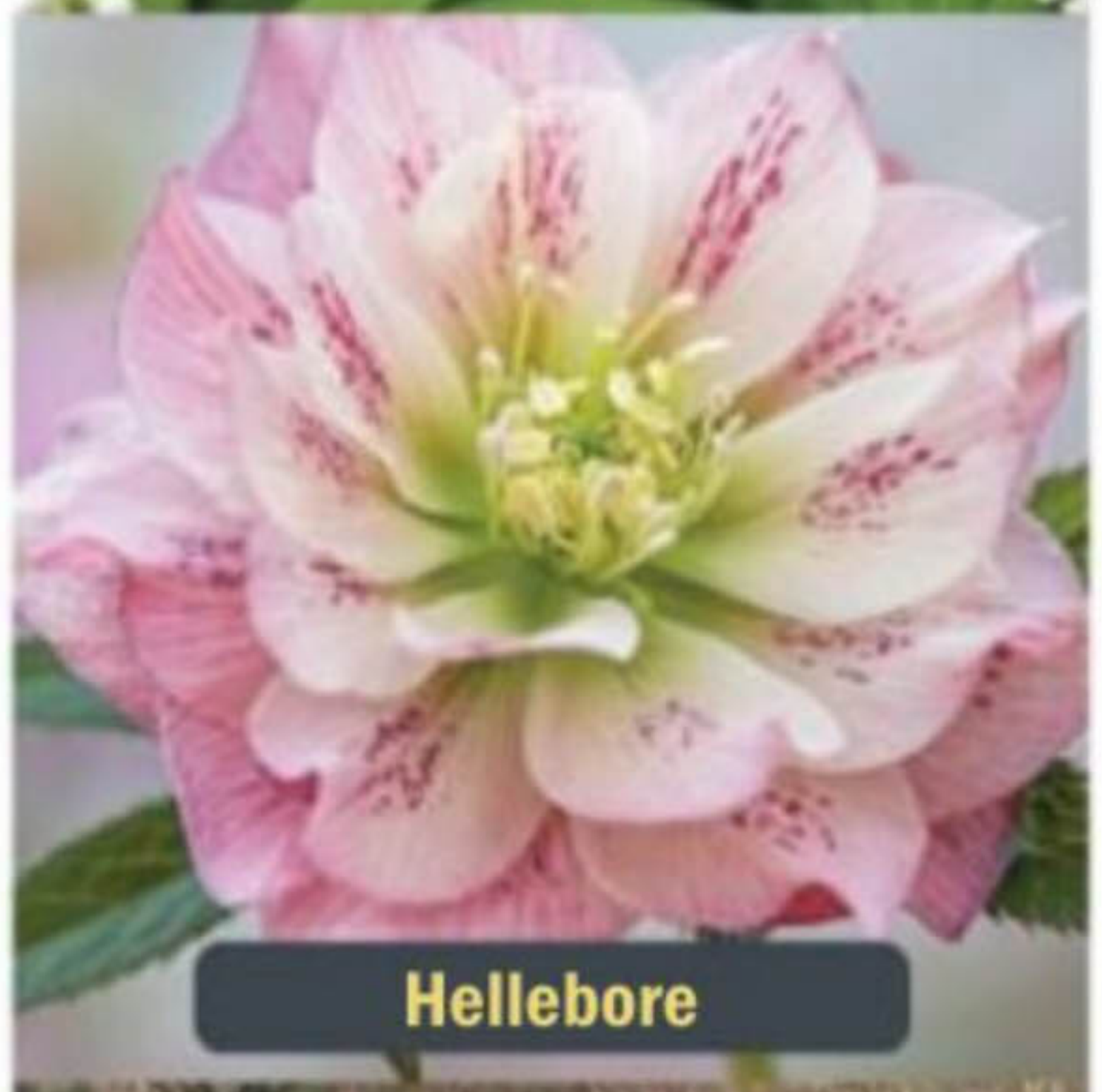
Zones 3-7

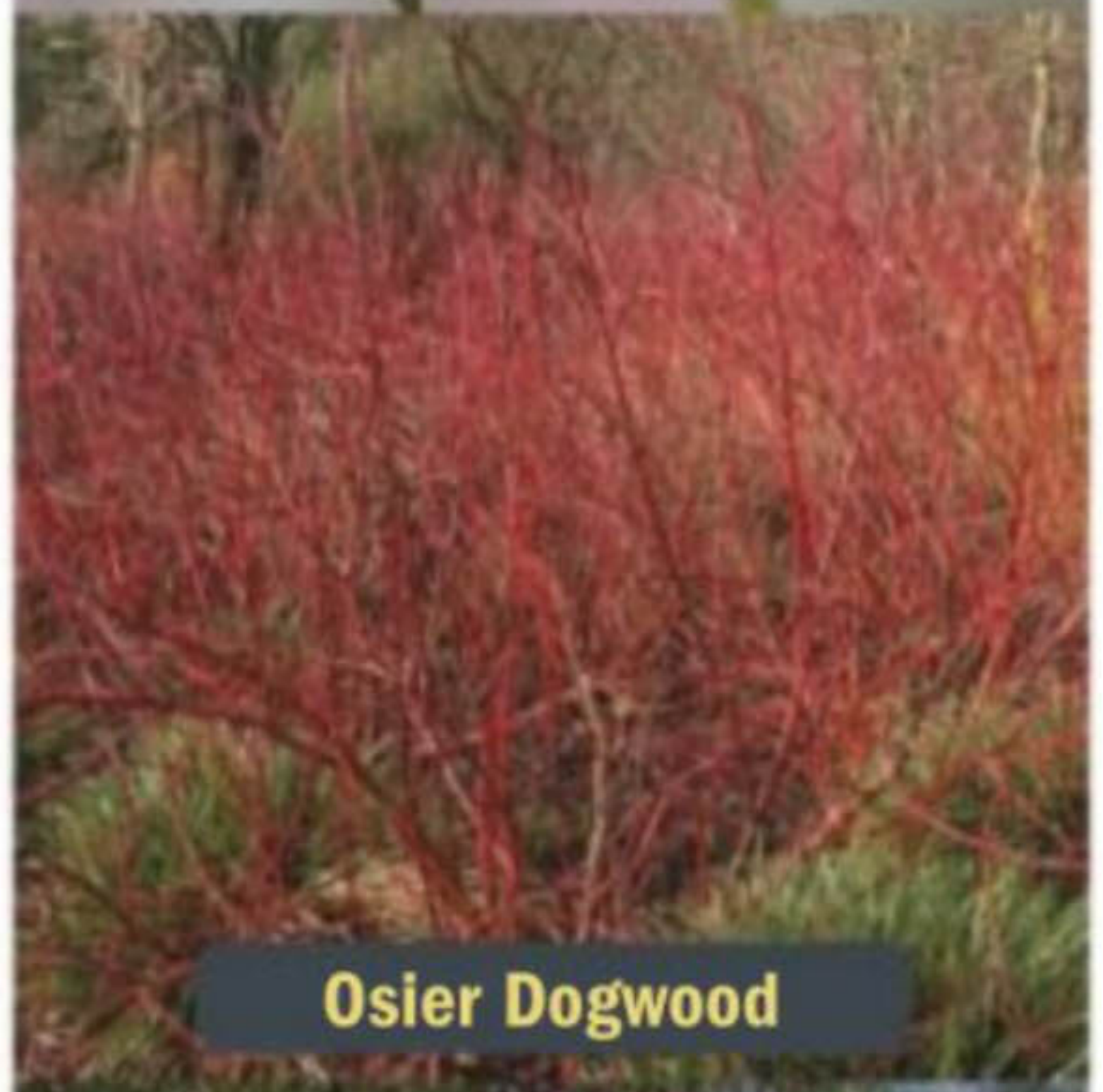
The Northeast region, extending from Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont down to New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and parts of neighboring states, experiences a wide range of weather. Beyond differences in temperature and snowfall, there are further variations due to a specific area's proximity to water, elevation, and urban heat islands.

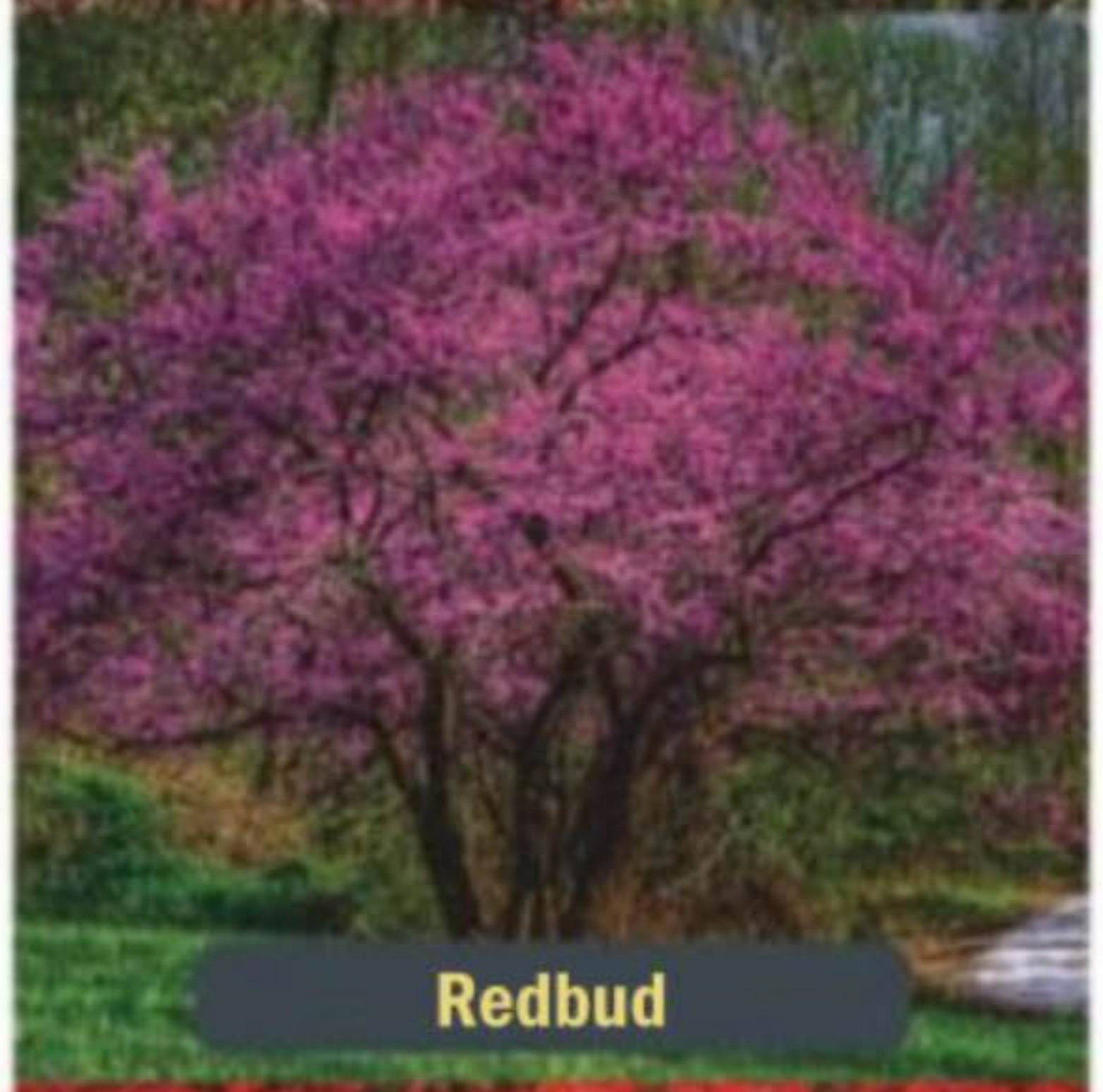
Suggested Plants

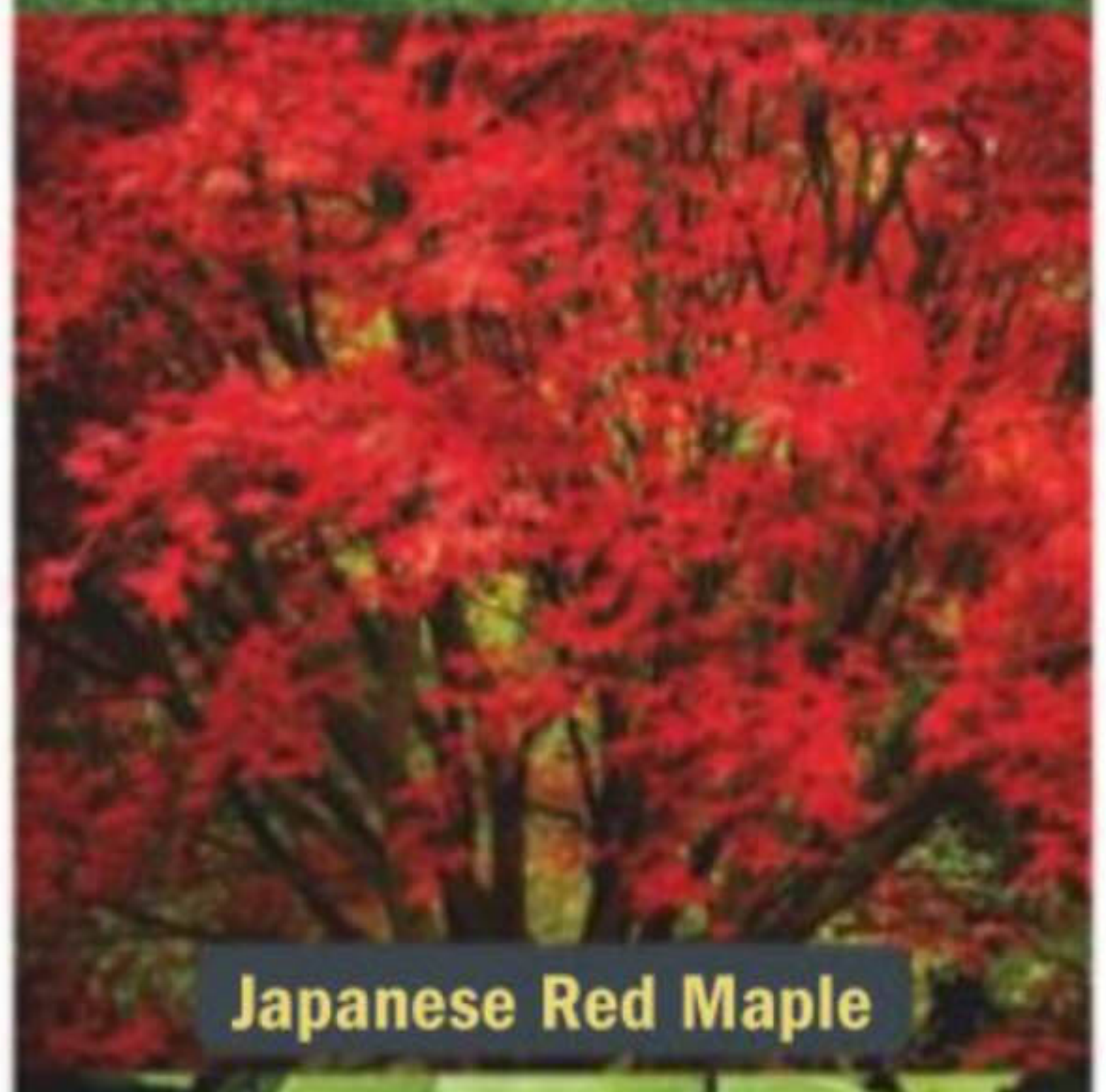
- **Sweet Woodruff:** This shade-loving, mat-forming groundcover produces delicate star-shaped white flowers in spring and is deer and rabbit resistant.
- **Hellebore:** A beautifully colored perennial plant that blooms in early spring—even in cold climates—signaling a change of season.
- **Osier Dogwood:** This native shrub boasts deep red branches that make it a cold-season highlight in wetlands and stream banks.
- **Redbud:** This compact tree showcases stunningly bright and vivid pink or purple flowers in early spring, making a landscape focal point.
- **Japanese Red Maple:** Originally Asian, this stunning tree has become a popular choice in the US for its delicate leaves, scultped trunk and stunning fall color.
- **Maidenhair Fern:** A delicate fern species that thrives in moist and shaded areas, its lacy fronds add an elegant touch to gardens and provide a lush backdrop for other plants.

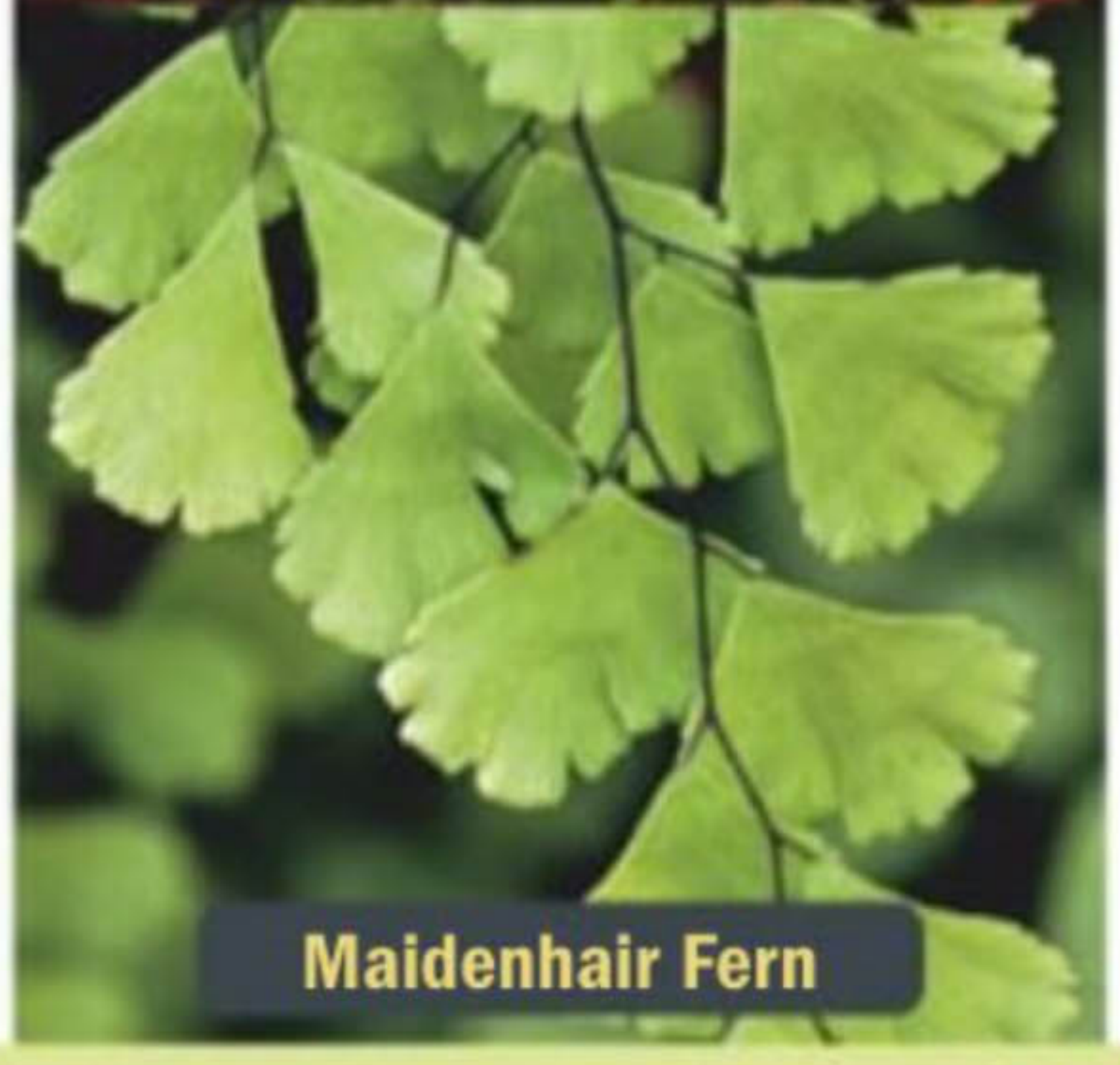

Sweet Woodruff

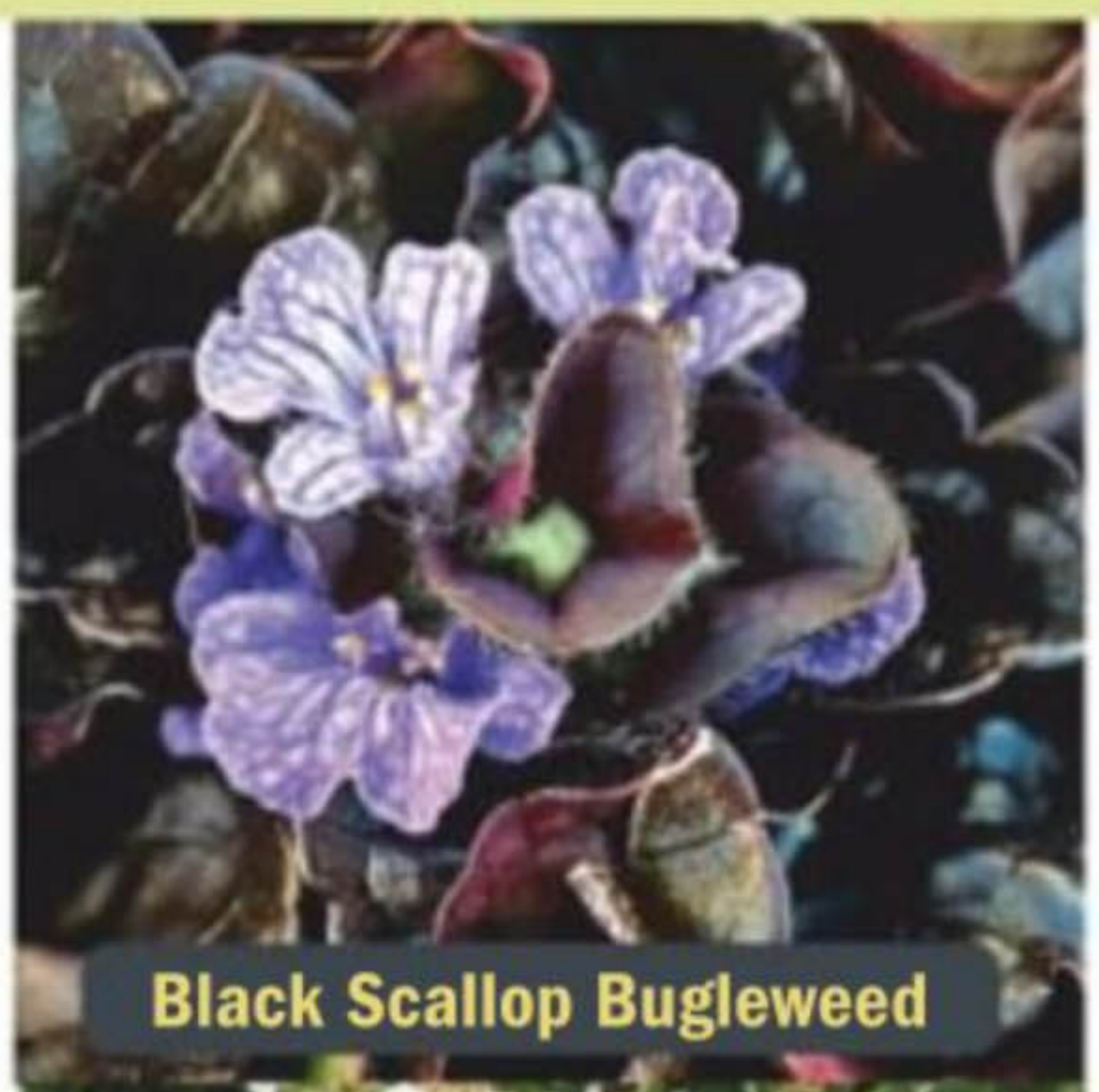

Hellebore

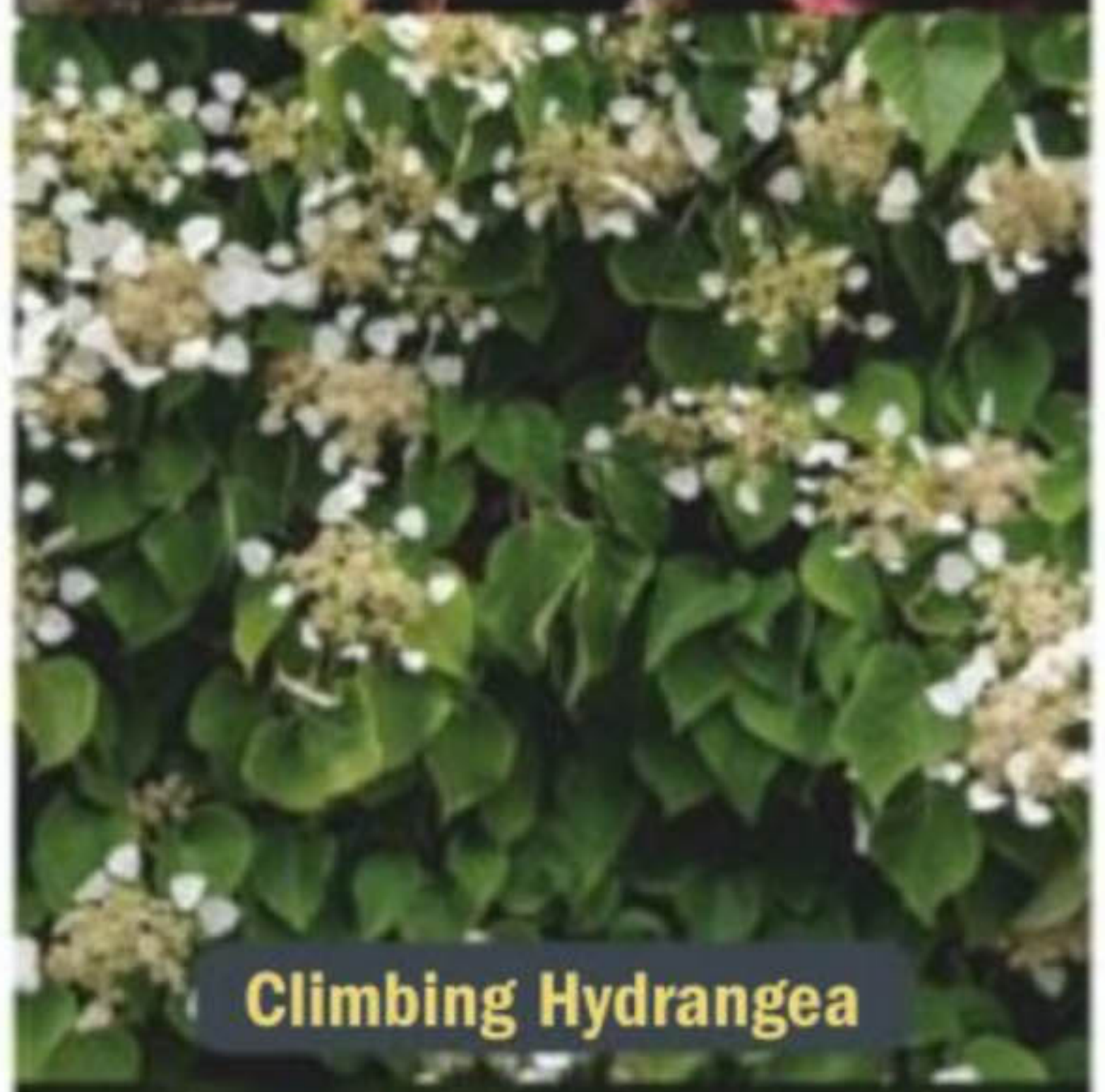

Osier Dogwood

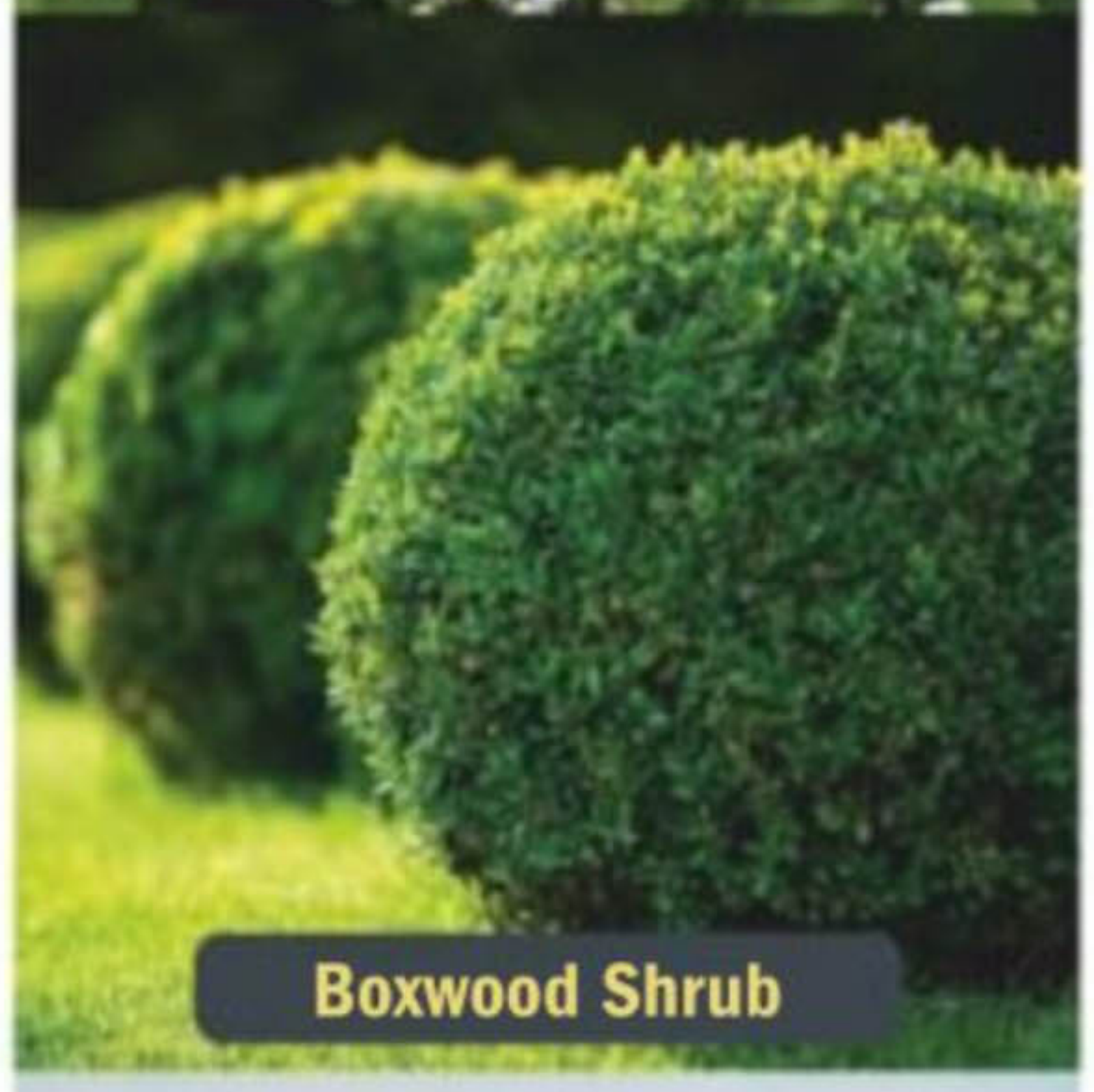

Redbud

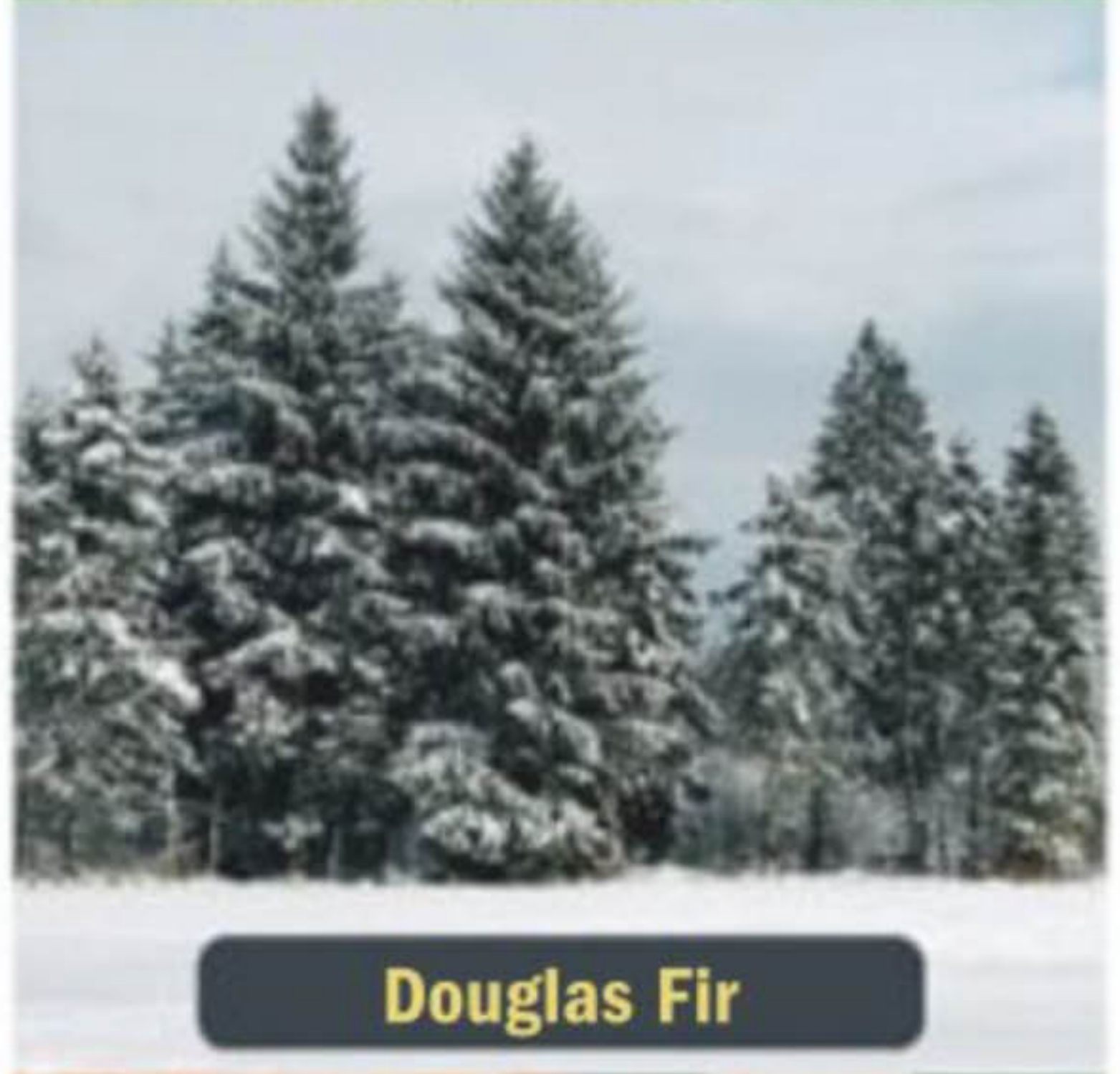

Japanese Red Maple

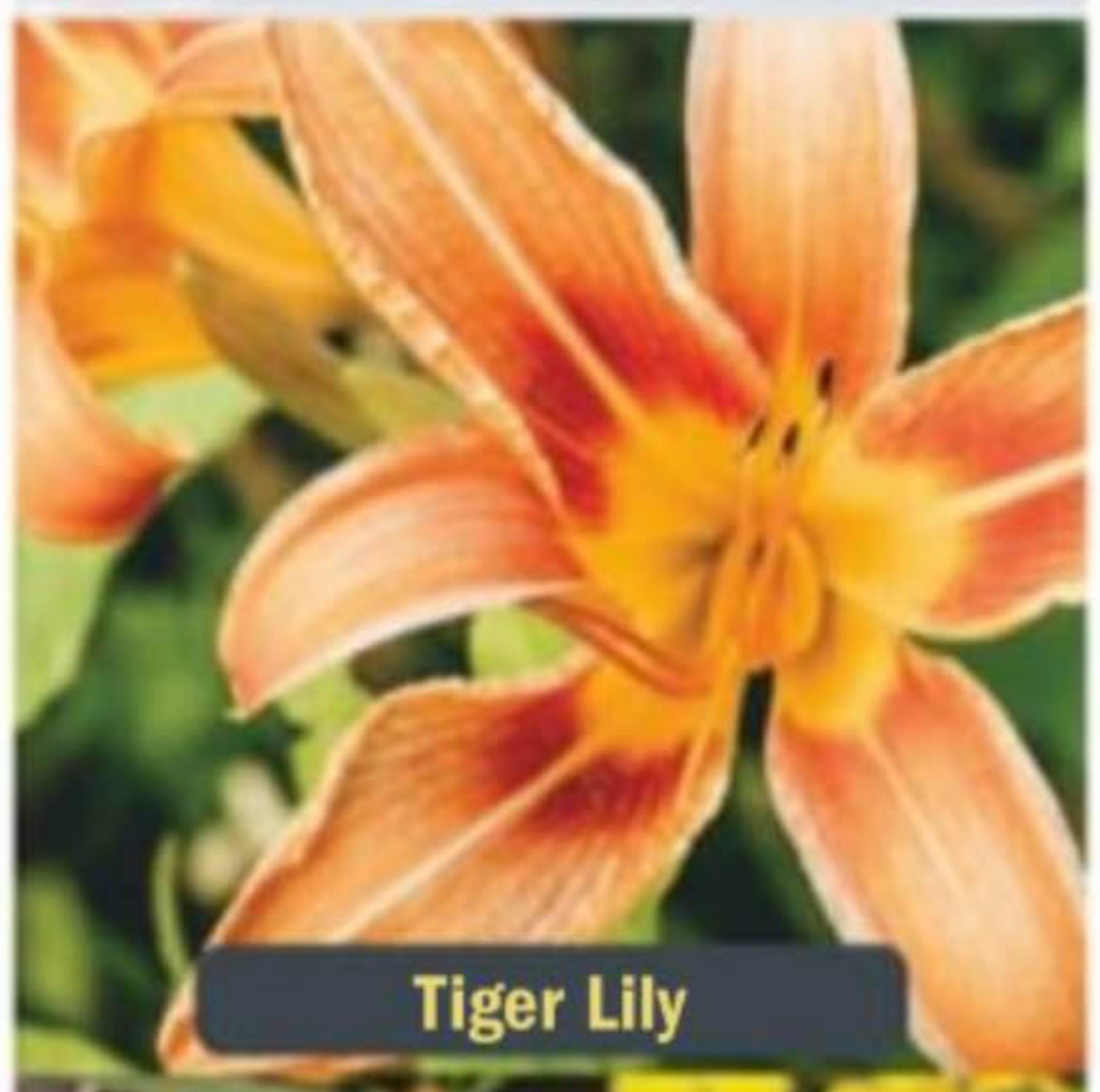

Maidenhair Fern

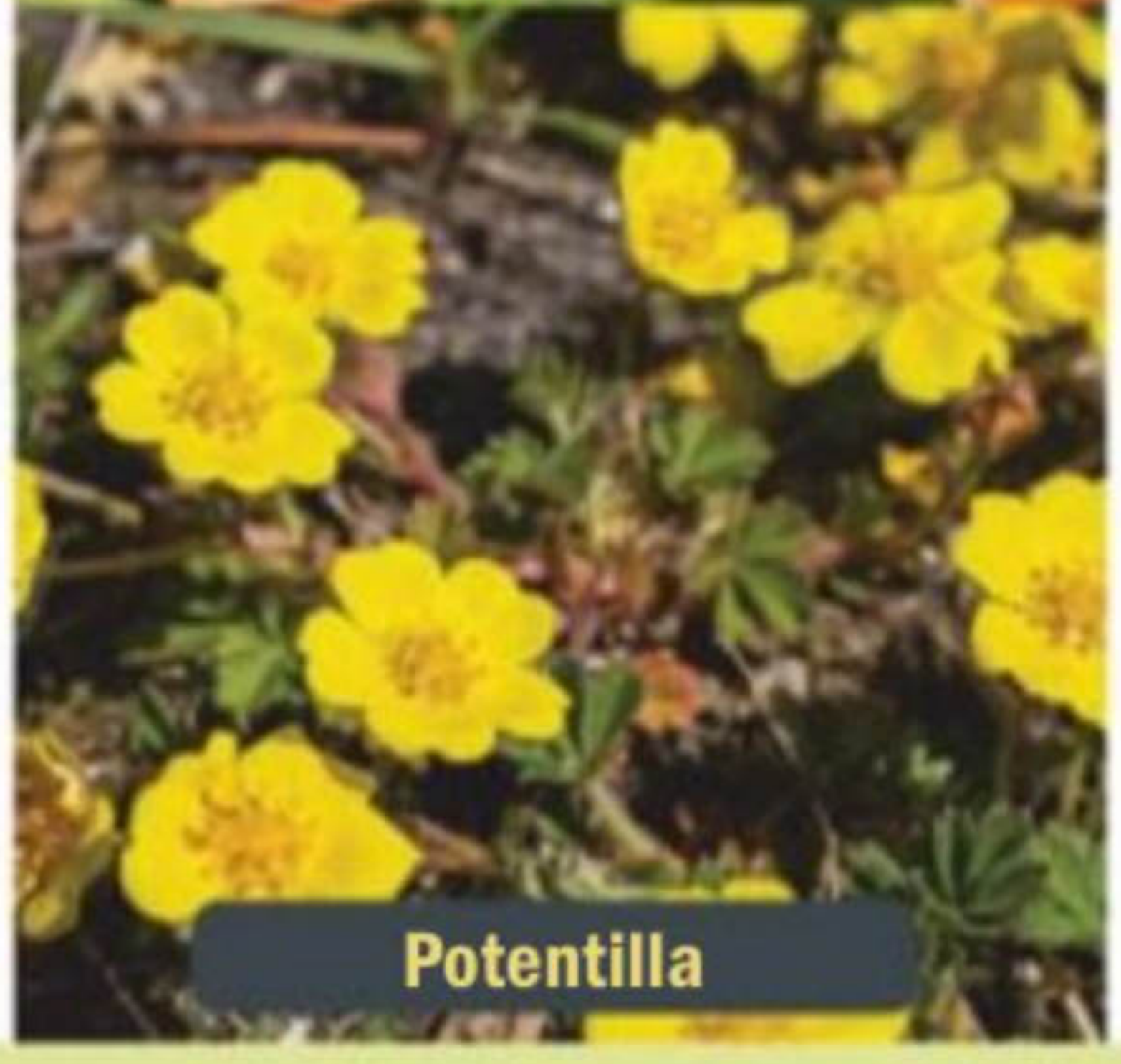

Black Scallop Bugleweed


Climbing Hydrangea


Boxwood Shrub


Douglas Fir


Tiger Lily


Potentilla

Northwest

USDA Plant Hardiness

Zones 3-6

This wide region includes states ranging from Minnesota and the Dakotas across to Washington and Oregon, and certain areas within this region may fall into different zones due to variations in topography, microclimates, and local weather patterns.

Suggested Plants

- **Black Scallop Bugleweed:** This stunning dark purple groundcover, which thrives in moist and cool climates, produces small blue flowers in spring.
- **Climbing Hydrangea:** A vigorous vine that flourishes in mild, moist conditions, it clings to walls, fences, and trees, and showcases beautiful clusters of white flowers during the summer months.
- **Boxwood Shrub:** These well-shaped evergreen standbys thrive in the Northwest's temperate climate, providing year-round structure and formality to gardens with their dense foliage.
- **Douglas Fir:** Firs and other evergreen trees like red cedars not only provide year-round foliage, they act as windbreaks and offer habitat for wildlife.
- **Tiger Lily:** This vibrant flowering plant adapts well to the Northwest's mild summers, providing splashes of bright color on stems 2-3 feet high.
- **Potentilla:** A hardy, low-growing shrub that thrives in the area's diverse soil conditions, its bright yellow or white flowers bloom throughout the summer, attracting a range of pollinators.

Marigolds

Hostas

The Best Plants for Sun, Shade, and In Between

Match your plants to the available sunlight for different areas of your garden.

SUPER BRIGHT AND FULL-SUN AREAS:

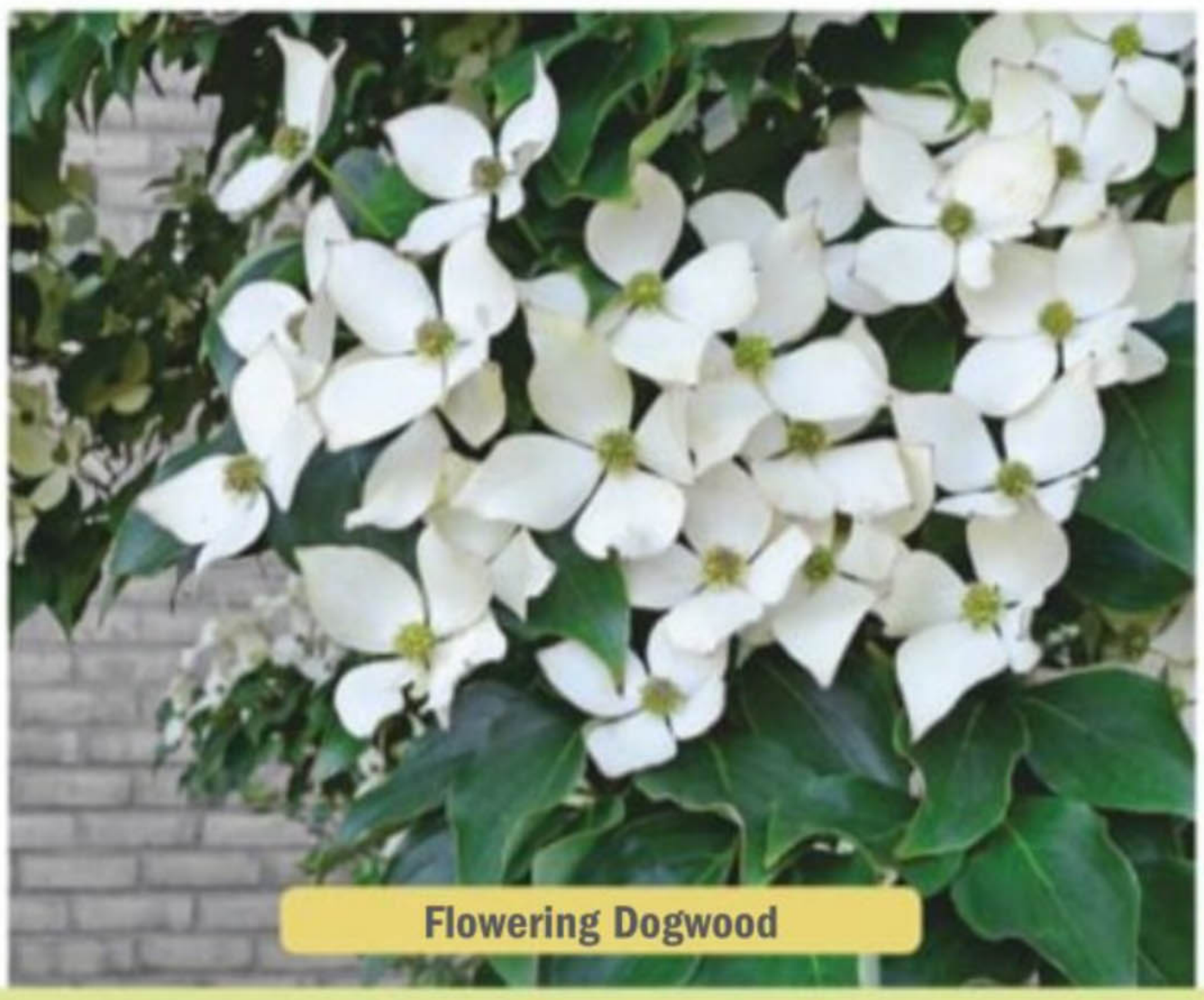
- **Sunflowers**: These cheerful giants have actually evolved to follow the sun's movement over the course of a day, maximizing their exposure.
- **Lavender:** This herb originated from Mediterranean regions, where it adapted to hot climates—its especially fragrant blooms make it a great walkway border.
- **Marigolds:** Their thick, waxy leaves reduce water loss through evaporation, allowing them to survive in the heat—and they also help deter pests.

DAPPLED OR PARTIAL-SHADE AREAS:

- **Flowering Dogwood:** These trees offer year-round beauty—from fresh blooms in the spring to patterned bark in the winter.
- **Astilbes:** Boasting feathery clusters of tiny flowers on stalks, these perennials prefer partial shade because direct sunlight can scorch their plumes.
- **Coral Bells:** These versatile perennials with tiny bell-shaped flowers prefer partial shade as too much intense sunlight can burn their multicolored leaves

FULL SHADE AREAS:

- **Impatiens:** Several varieties do well in heavily shaded areas, and typically bloom in vibrant pink and red hues.
- **Hostas:** From partial to mostly shade, these hardy large-leaf go-tos can handle very little sunlight and still thrive—plus they can be easily cut and divided.
- **English Ivy:** This admittedly vigorous grower can climb and adapt its growth pattern to reach areas with more available light.



Flowering Dogwood

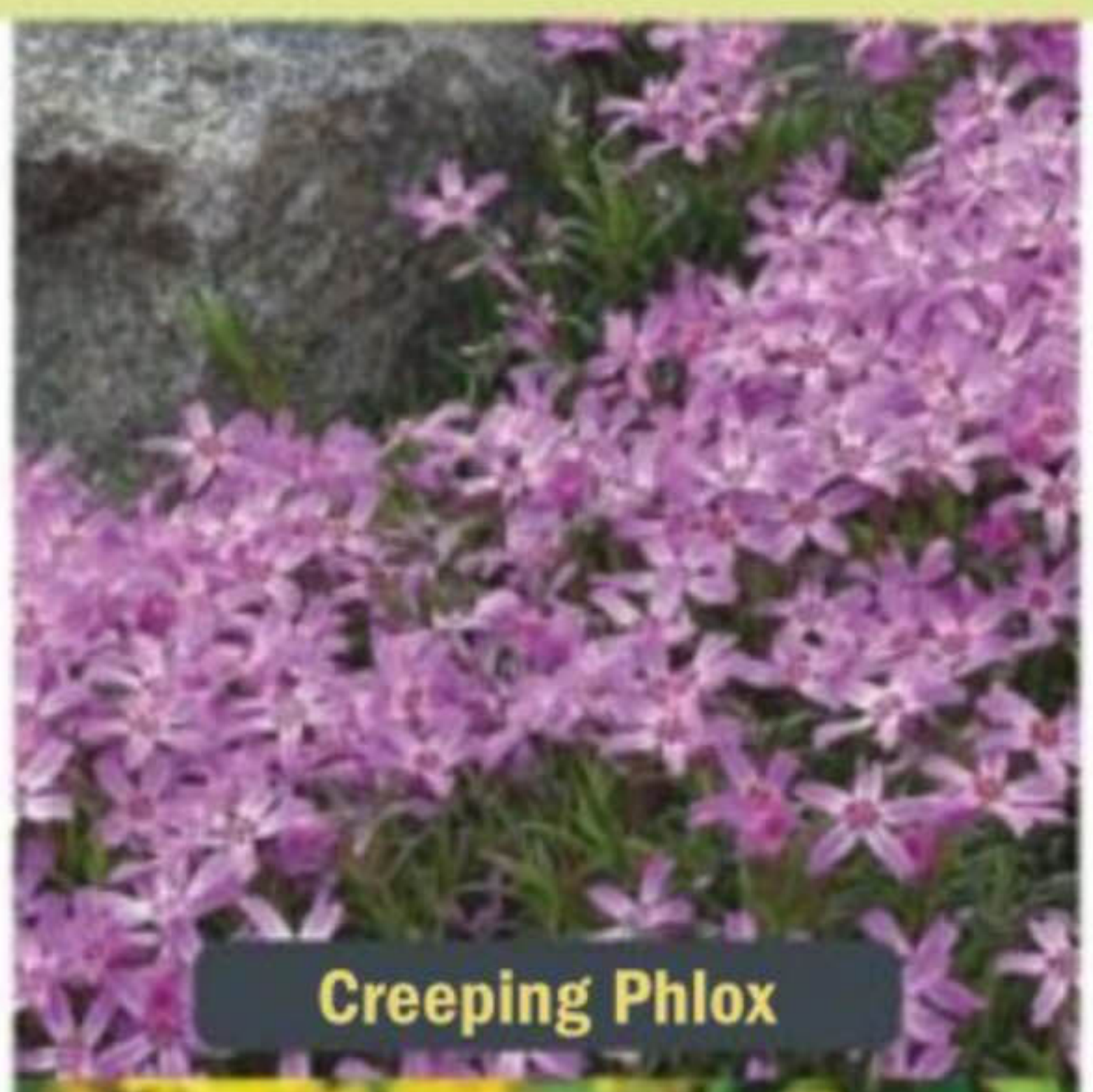
South Central

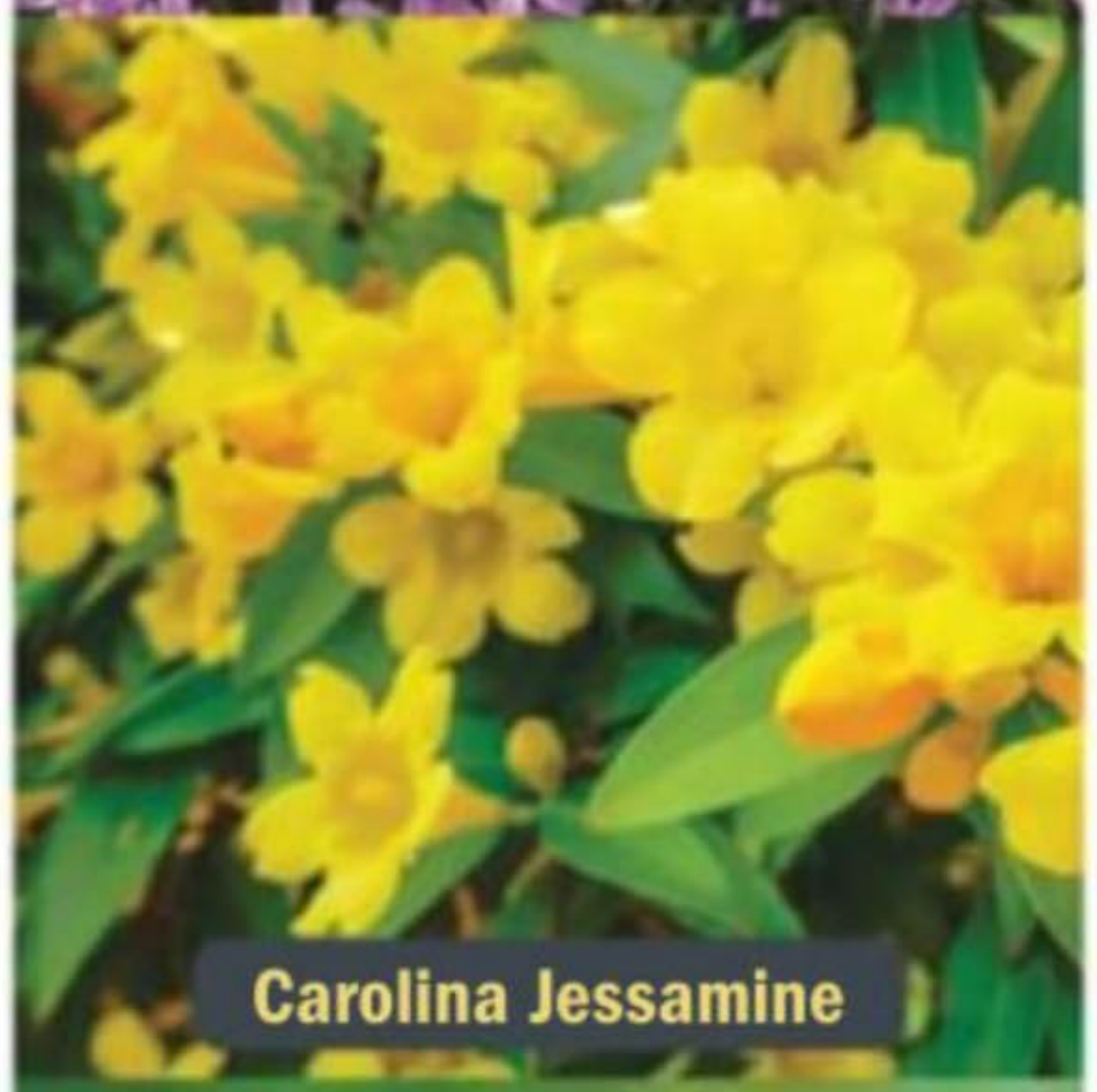
USDA Plant Hardiness
Zones 7-9

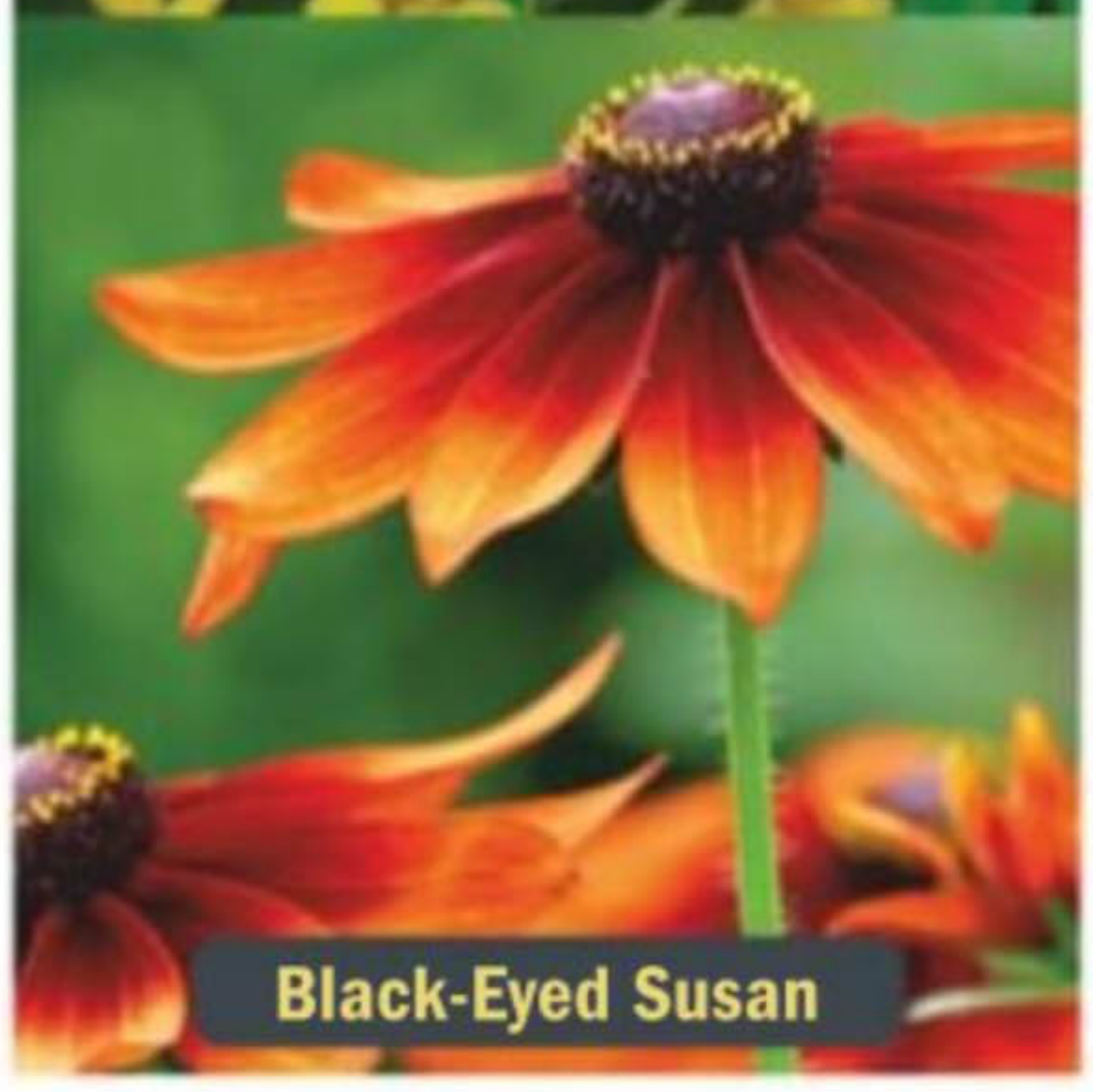
This region covers states such as Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and parts of neighboring states. The South Central region typically experiences hot summers and mild winters, however, there can be variations in areas within the region due to factors such as elevation and proximity to bodies of water.

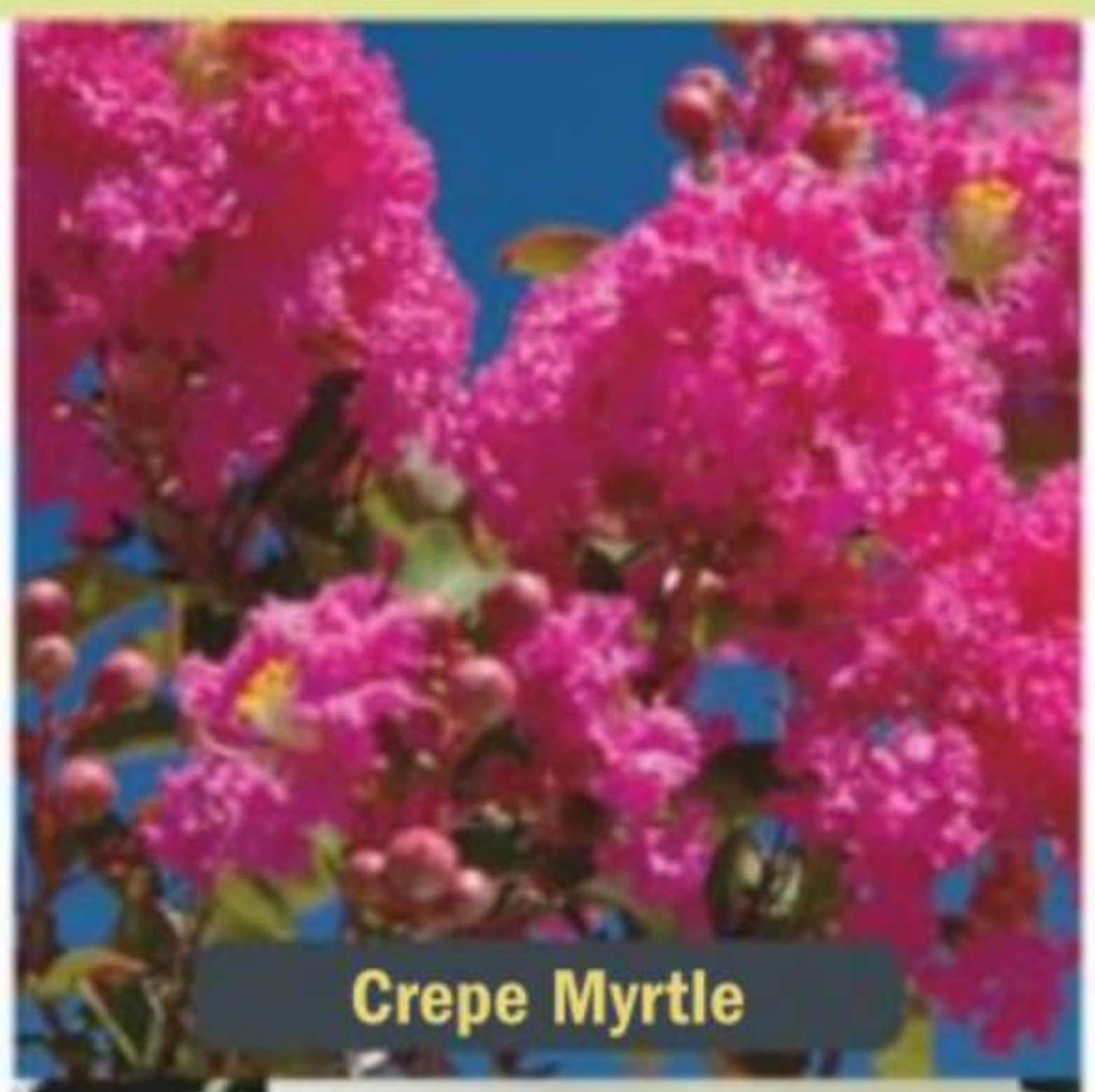
Suggested Plants

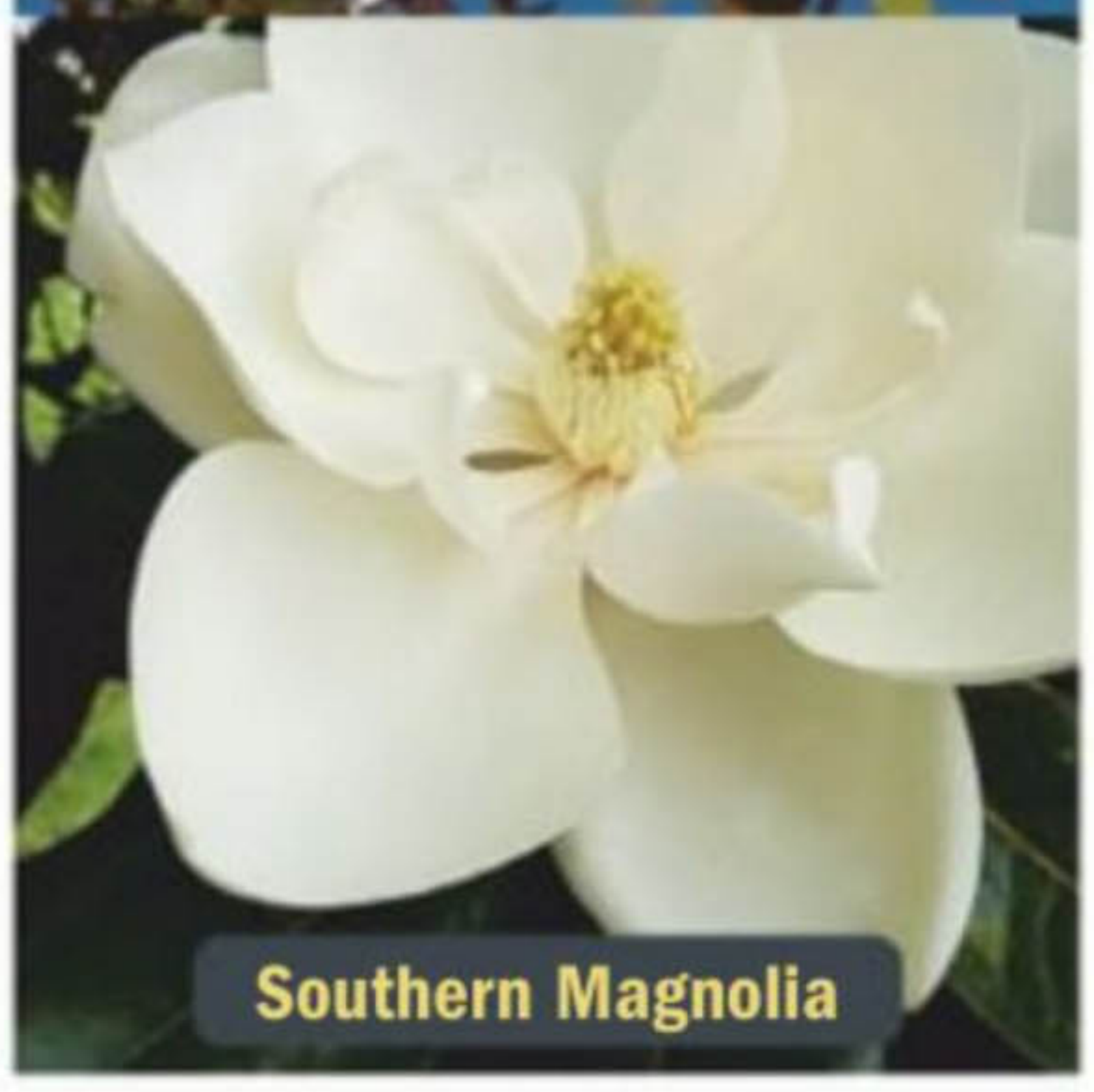
- **Creeping Phlox:** A low-growing perennial thrives in sunny and well-drained areas, with a brilliant carpet of colorful flowers that attracts butterflies.
- **Carolina Jessamine:** This twining vine flourishes in a warm and humid climate, with fragrant yellow flowers that bloom in early spring, adding a burst of color to fences, trellises, and arbors.
- **Black-Eyed Susan:** A native wildflower that adapts well to hot and dry conditions, its bright yellow or orange late-summer flowers with dark centers attract bees and butterflies, making it a popular choice for wildflower gardens.
- **Crepe Myrtle:** This small tree or shrub explodes with vibrant clusters of pink, red, purple, or white flowers during the summer months, and thrives with occasoinal severe pruning.
- **Southern Magnolia:** This iconic tree of the South is known for its large, glossy leaves and white flowers so fragrant you can smell them down the block. Just be sure to give a sapling lots of space—it can eventually grow to a whopping 80 feet tall and 40 feet wide.


Creeping Phlox


Carolina Jessamine


Black-Eyed Susan


Crepe Myrtle


Southern Magnolia

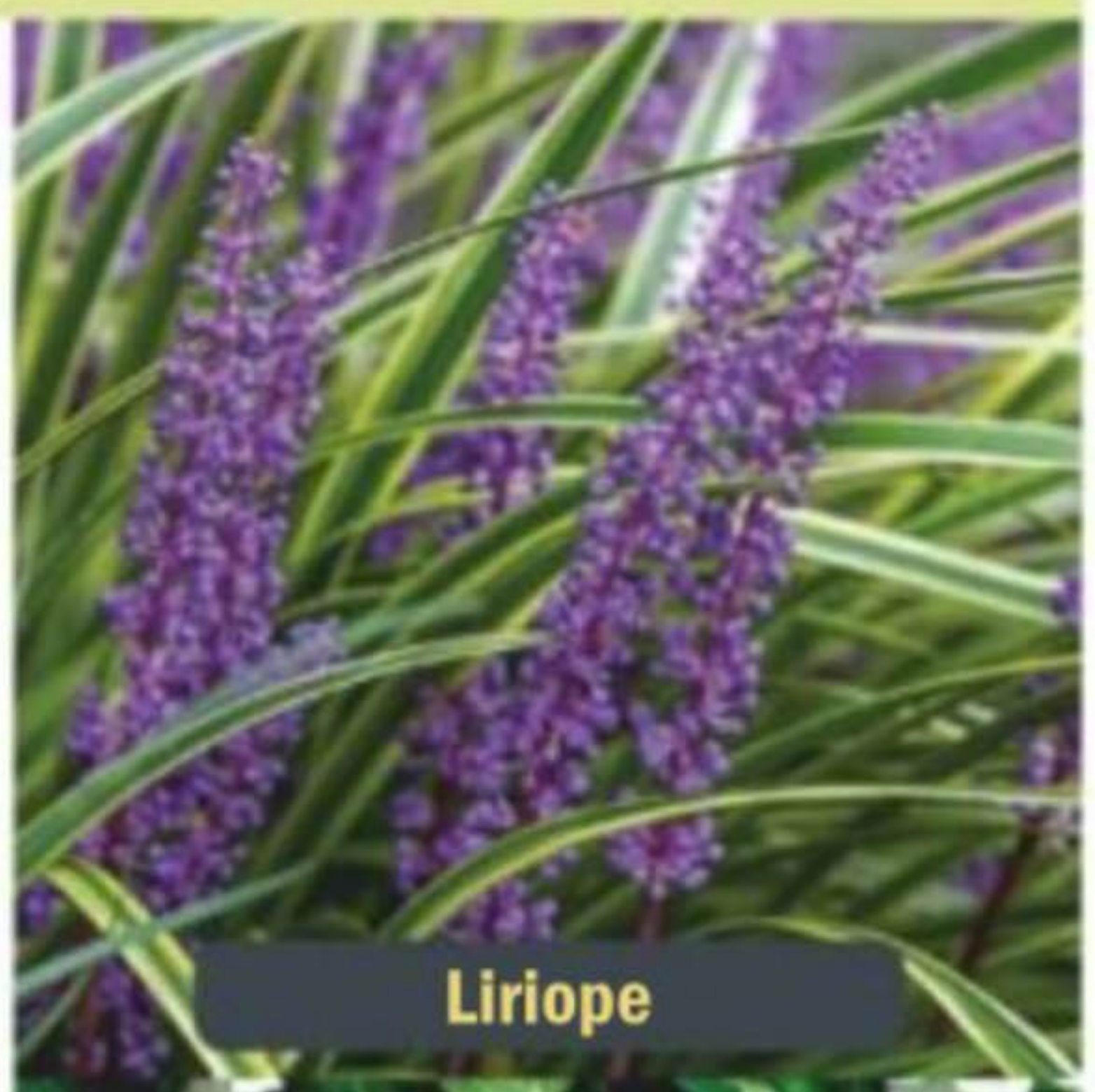
Southeast

USDA Plant Hardiness
Zones 7-10

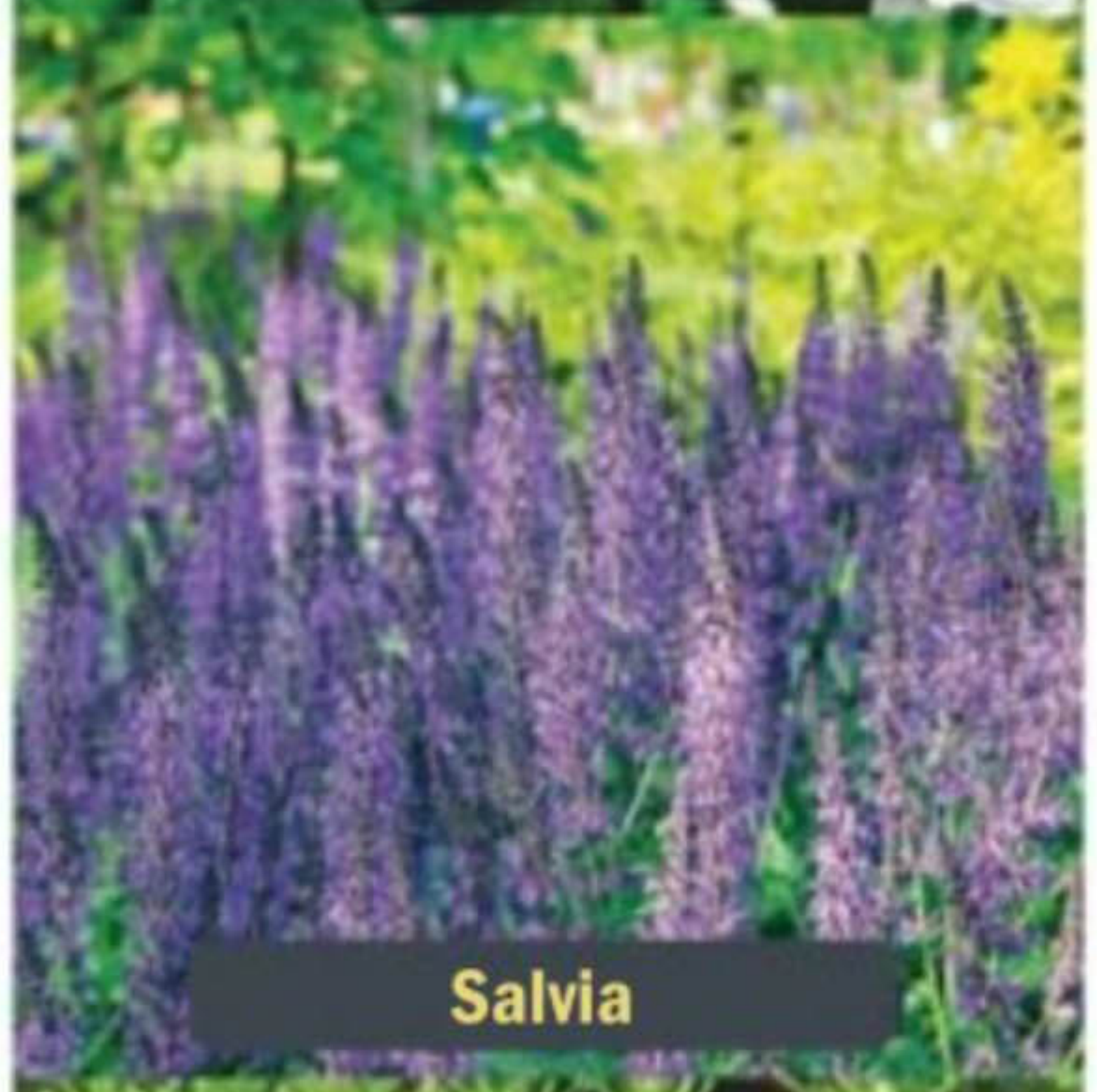
The Southeast region includes Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, and parts of neighboring states. Coastal regions have milder winters than inland areas. The region has a range of hardiness zones, with variations within the region due to elevation, proximity to bodies of water, and urban heat islands.

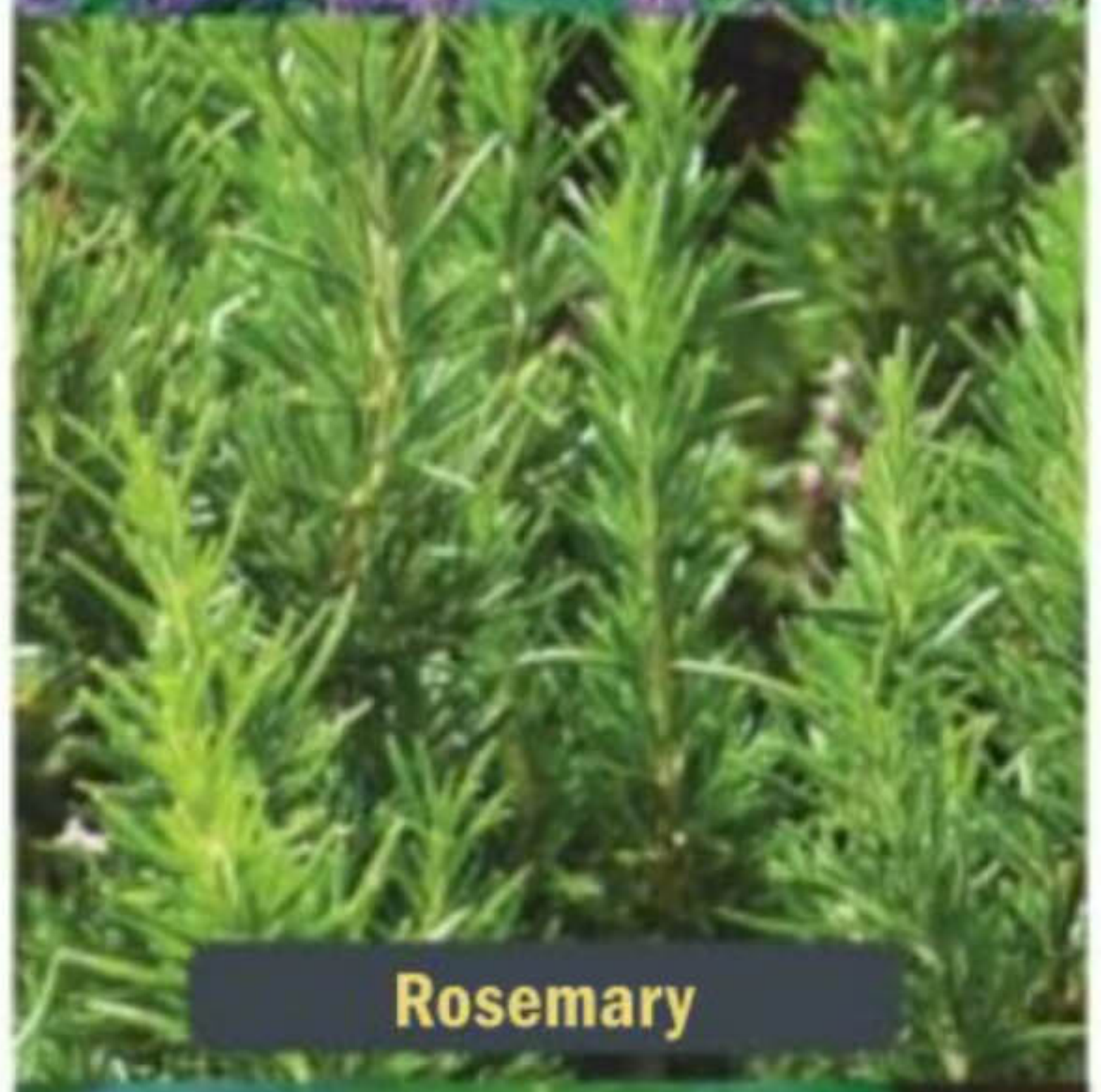
Suggested Plants

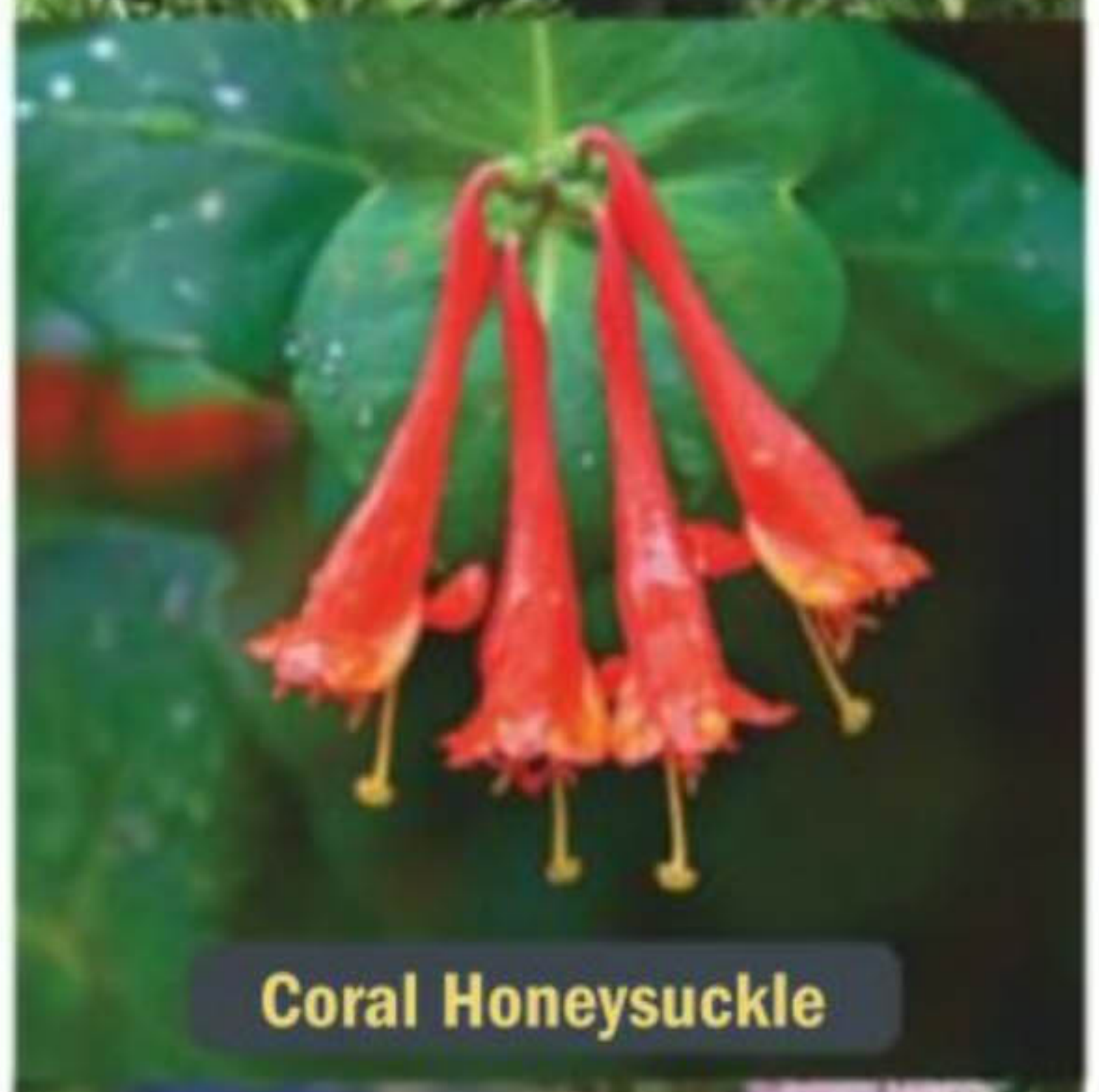
- **Liriope:** Also called lilyturf or monkey grass, this versatile perennial boasts spikes of purple or white flowers from grass-like tufts that provide year-round interest.
- **Jasmine:** This vine offers up delicate white or yellow flowers that release a sweet scent in the evenings, making it a popular choice for trellises or arbors near outdoor seating areas.
- **Salvia:** Also called sage, this massive family of perennials handles heat and humidity well, offering up vibrant spikes of blue, purple, red, or pink flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies (but not deer).
- **Rosemary:** An aromatic herb that thrives in sunny, well-drained areas, its needle-like leaves can be used for cooking while its blue flowers add garden beauty.
- **Coral Honeysuckle:** A native vine that flourishes in warm and humid conditions, its tubular coral-colored flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies. (Try to avoid planting Asian varieties which can be invasive and very tough to stop from taking over your garden.)
- **Mountain Azalea:** The Southeast is known for its stunning azalea bushes for good reason. This native variety is the easiest to grow, thriving in acidic soil, and explodes in fragrant white or pink flowers in spring.

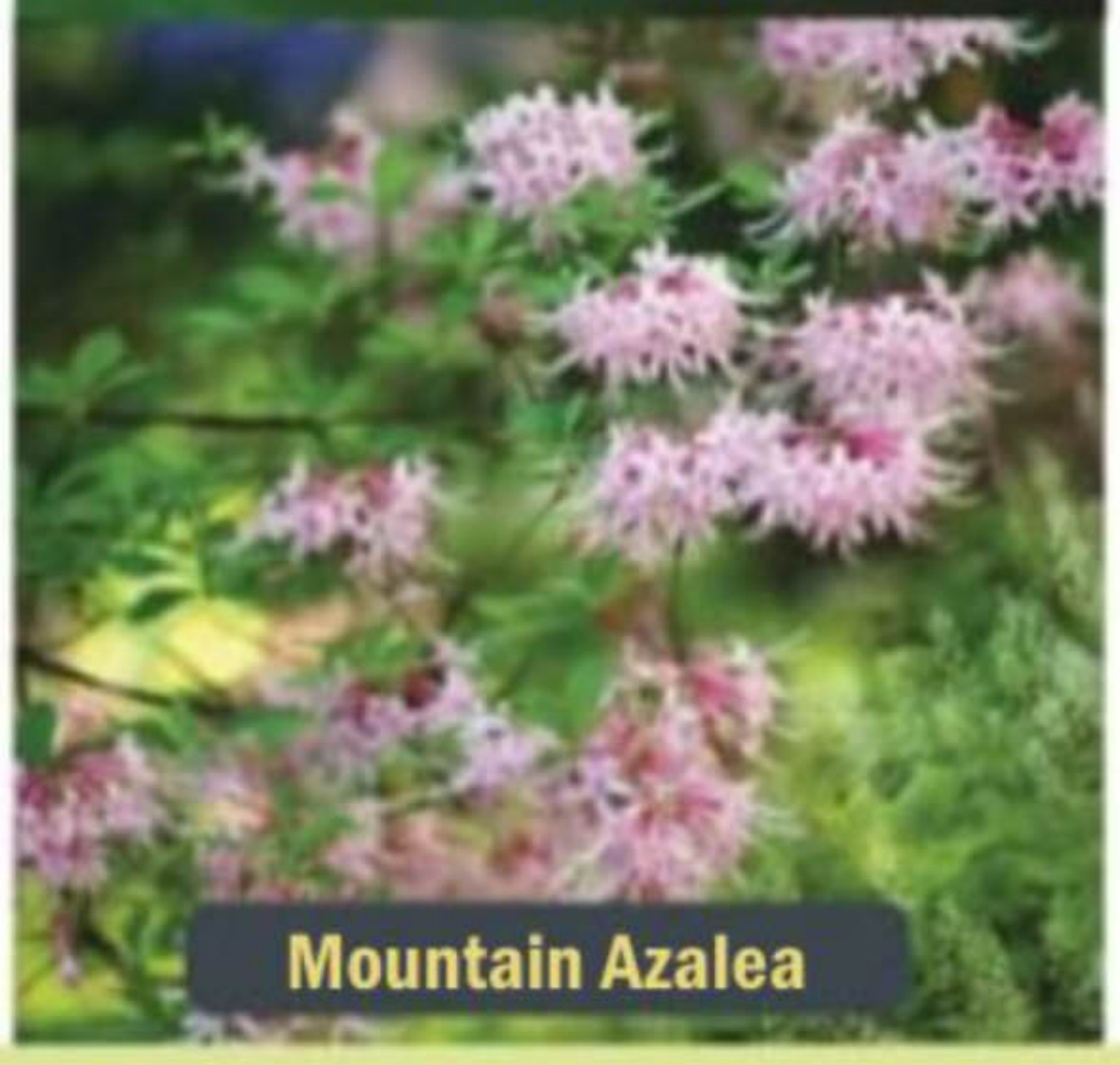

Liriope

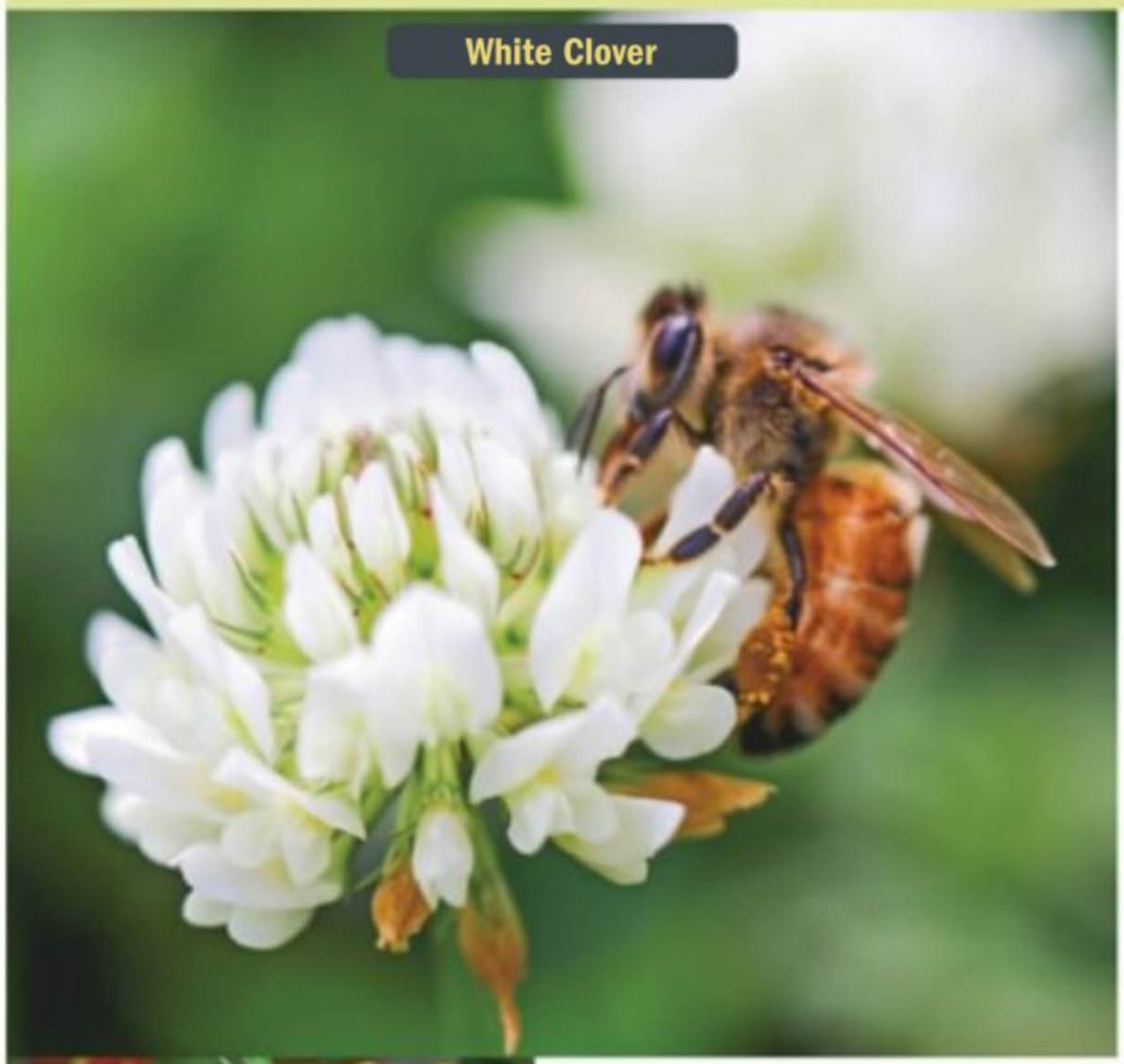
Jasmine

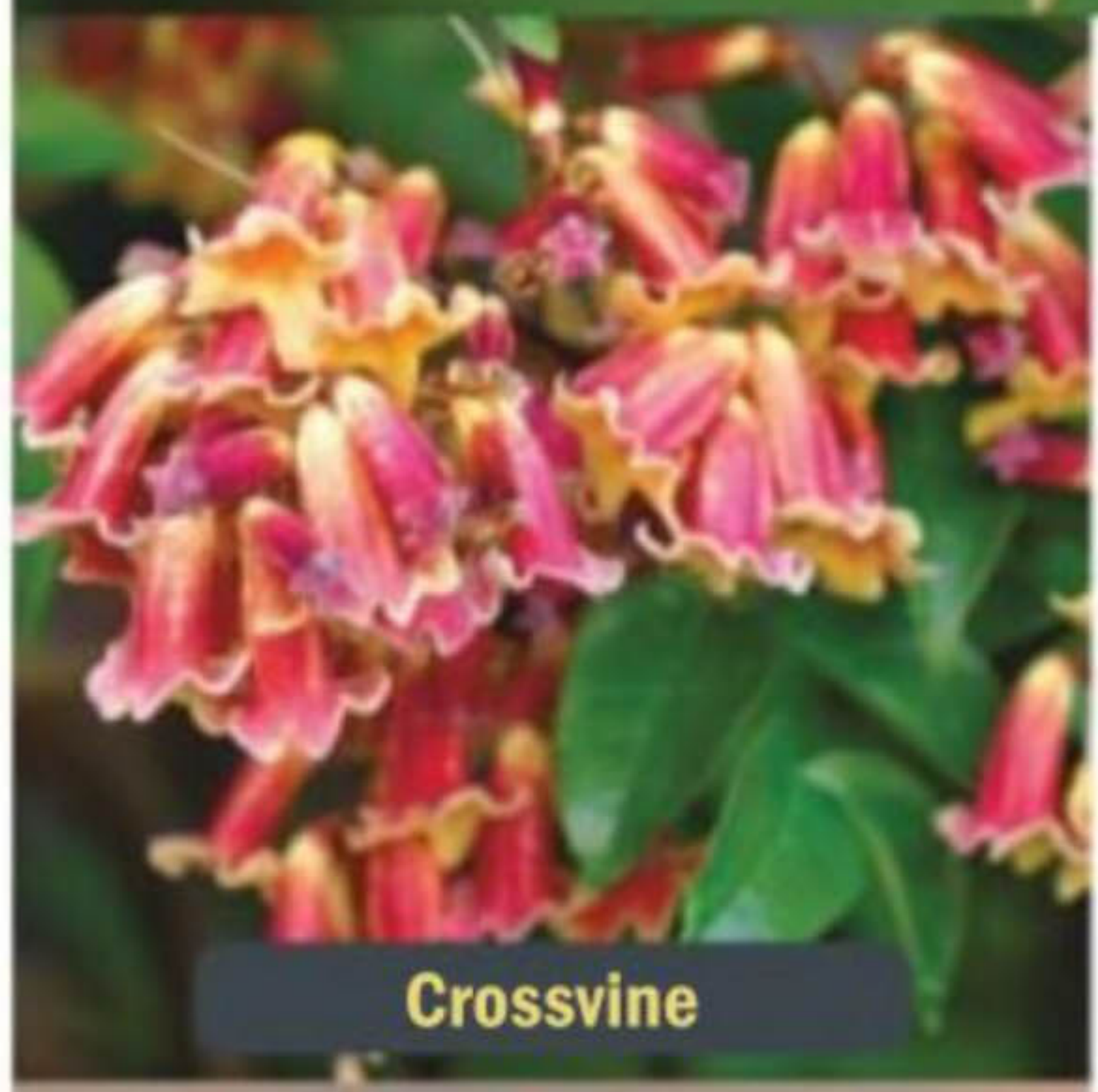

Salvia

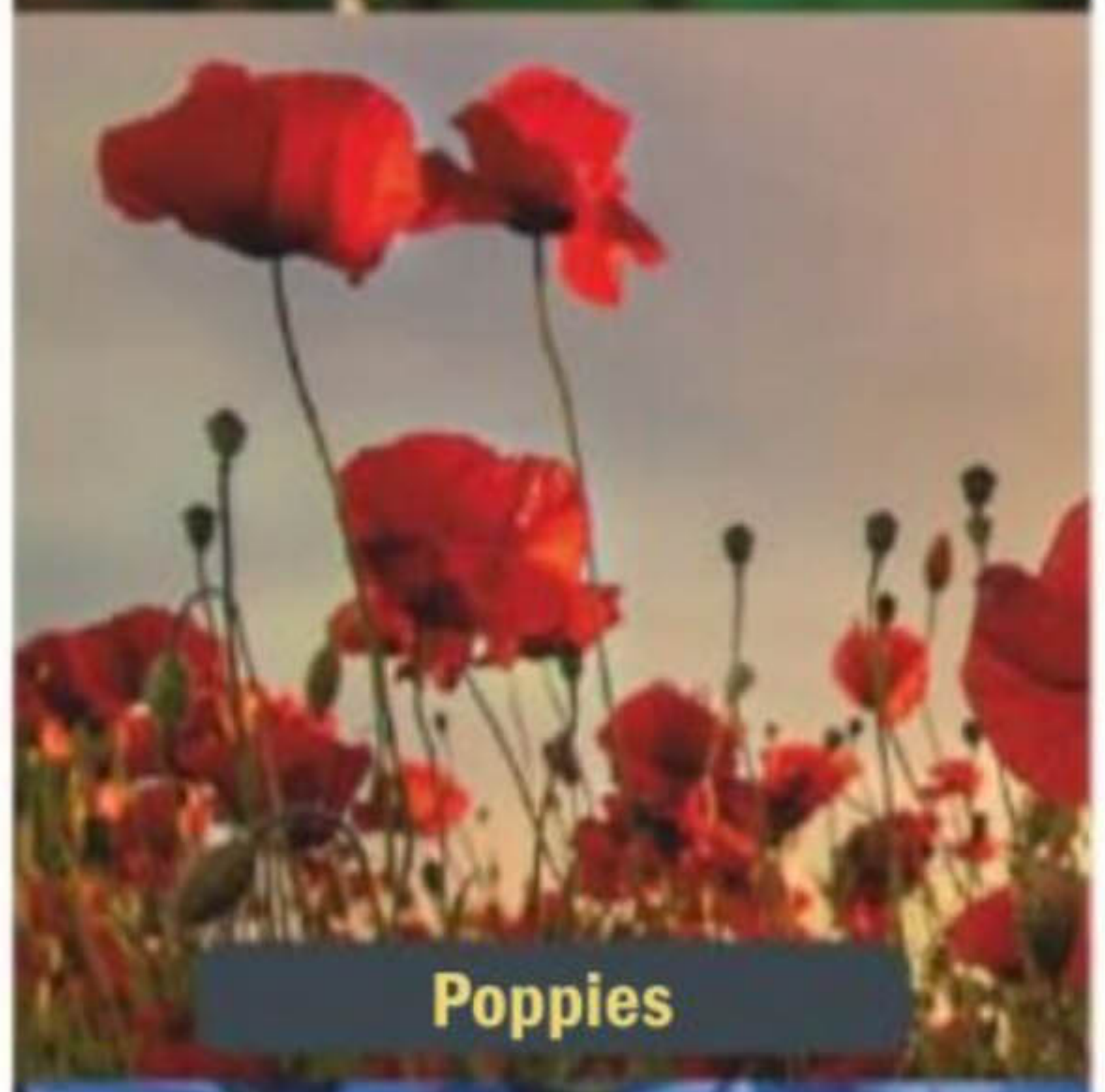

Rosemary

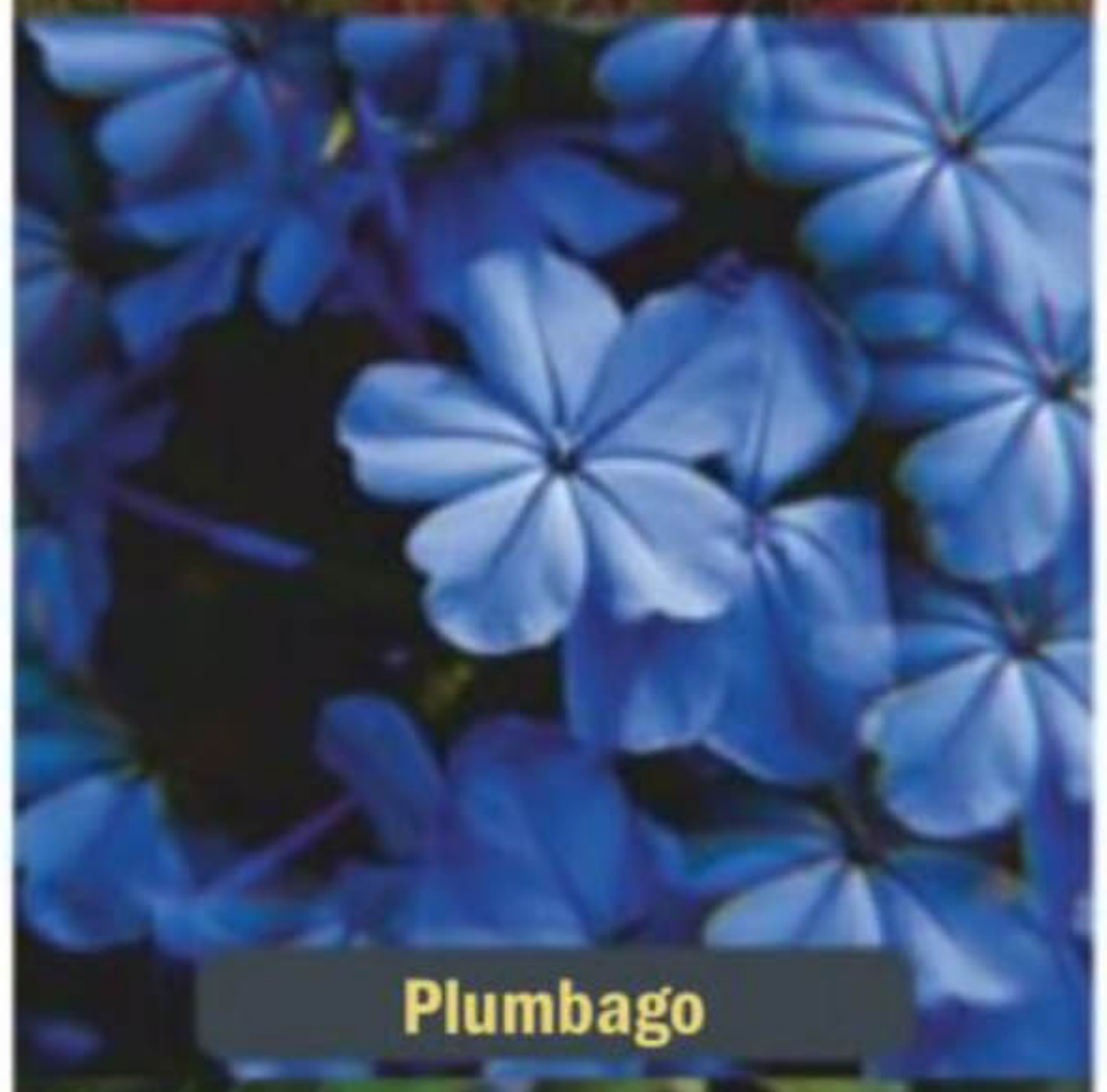

Coral Honeysuckle


Mountain Azalea


White Clover


Crossvine


Poppies


Plumbago

Avocado Tree

Southwest

USDA Plant Hardiness

Zones 8-11

This region covers southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, southern Nevada, and parts of neighboring states. It generally has a hot and arid climate, but there can be variations within the region due to elevation, desert vs. mountainous areas, and proximity to water.

Suggested Plants

- **White Clover:** A low-growing perennial that thrives in dry and arid conditions, it has the ability to fix nitrogen in the soil, making it a beneficial plant partner for enriching garden beds or as a cover crop.
- **Crossvine:** A fast-growing vine that flourishes in a hot and sunny climate, its trumpet-shaped flowers in shades of orange, red, or yellow add a splash of color to fences, walls, or pergolas. (Unlike the similar looking trumpet creeper, crossvine is not invasive.)
- **Poppies:** These colorful, delicate, almost gravity-defying flowers adapt well to dry, desert-like conditions. Their vibrant blooms create a striking contrast of bright colors against the arid landscape.
- **Plumbago:** A shrub that thrives in the Southwest's hot, dry climate, it has deep roots that allow it to access water from deep within the soil, making it drought-tolerant, and its leaves are thick and waxy, which helps reduce water loss through evaporation.
- **Avocado Trees:** These fruit-bearing evergreen trees require a long growing season with plenty of sunshine, which is of course abundant in the southwest ern US, and they also need well-drained soil—water the tree deeply, but then let the soil dry out between waterings.

Your next stop: your local nursery. Keep in mind that the best plants for your garden could still differ from this guide and the USDA's—varying state to state, city to city, even neighborhood to neighborhood! Ask around for what grows near you.

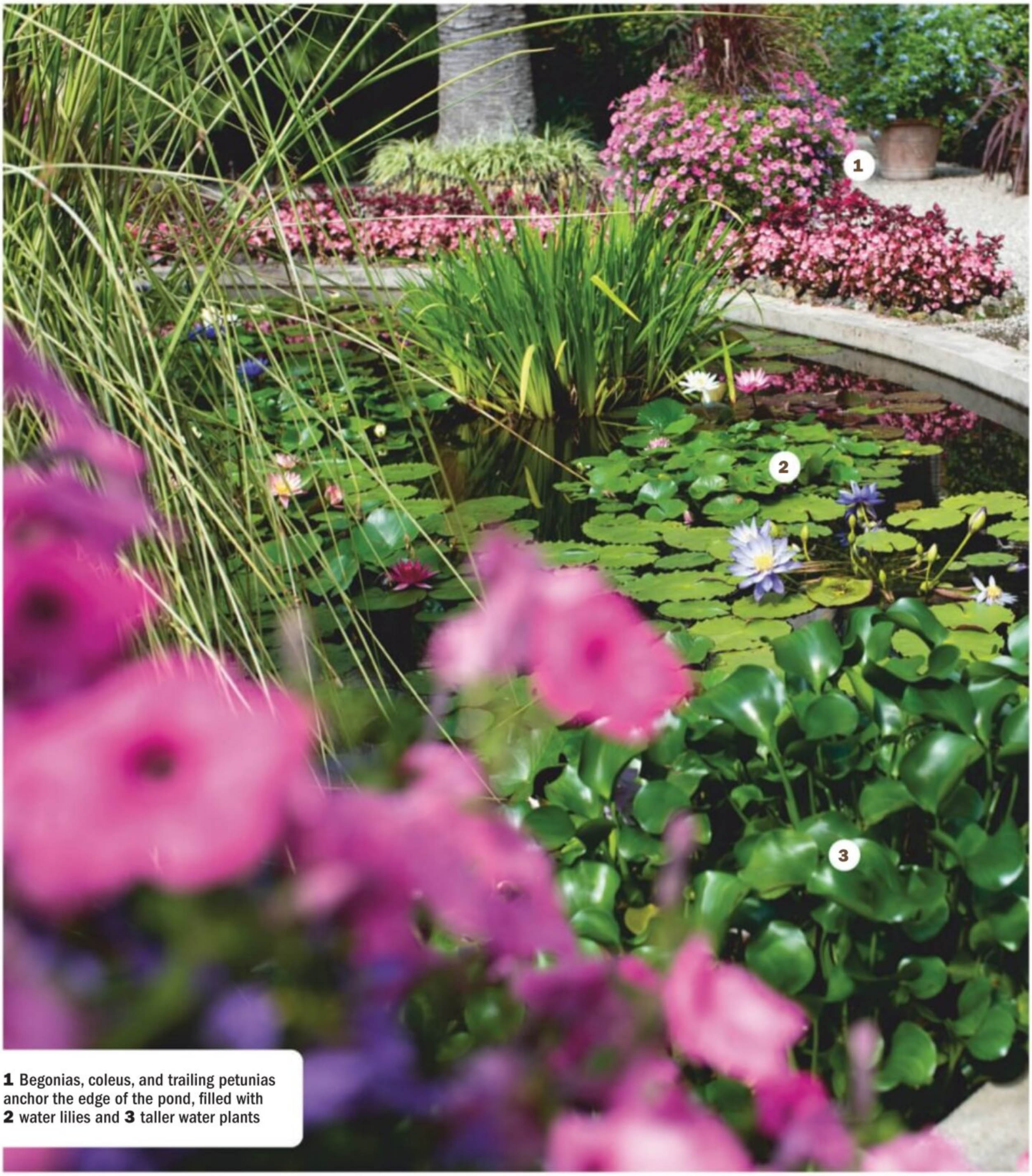
Annuals vs. Perenials

	Annuals	**Perennials**
Maintenance	Annuals require regular watering, fertilizer, and deadheading to maximize continuous blooming.	Perennials are more low-maintenance; they often have deeper root systems, allowing them to access water and nutrients more efficiently.
Replanting	Annual plants complete their life cycle within a single season and need to be replanted each year either from seed or young seedlings.	Perennials require less frequent replanting since they come back year after year from their root systems. Once established, they can live for multiple years or even decades.
Blooming	With regular care, annual plants will continuously bloom throughout their growing season.	Perennial plants typically have a specific blooming period that varies depending on the species; some can be as short as a few weeks.
Garden Design	Annuals offer versatility and flexibility, giving you an opportunity to experiment with different colors, textures, and arrangements.	Perennial plants can form the backbone of your landscape design and can create a consistent aesthetic year after year.

But why choose? A strategic combination of both annuals and perennials can create a dynamic and visually appealing garden that evolves with each passing season.

Master Your Landscaping

Unlock the full potential of your garden.



1 Begonias, coleus, and trailing petunias anchor the edge of the pond, filled with **2** water lilies and **3** taller water plants

4 Orange cosmos stun planted en masse; **5** Climbing roses look elegant roughly supported by an arch

Landscaping has the remarkable ability to turn an ordinary backyard into an extraordinary space. From defining boundaries with fences to setting the mood with lighting, there are countless options to consider. The key lies in understanding your backyard's unique characteristics and tailoring your choices accordingly. By working with the natural attributes of your backyard, you can create a space that feels harmonious and tailored to your needs.

Soil

If you have uneven terrain in your backyard, you may need to move soil to level the ground and create proper drainage channels. This can involve digging trenches or shaping the ground to redirect water away from structures or low-lying areas.

Watering

Your plants' lifeline is water, so establishing a convenient and reliable watering routine is essential. Depending on your backyard layout, your area's climate, your soil, and the plants you've chosen, you may need to consider installing in-ground sprinklers or drip irrigation systems to keep your plants hydrated. If you do, make sure to label everything so you know which water valve goes to which bed—you'll ensure that every plant gets its daily dose of hydration without overwatering.

Lighting

Why should your garden only be enjoyed during daylight hours? Add some charm in the evening by including lighting in your landscaping plans. Illuminate your garden path, highlight your statement plants, or create a cozy nook near some of your favorite spots. String lights, solar lamps, or even DIY mason jar lanterns not only provide elegant illumination but can also create lovely ambiance at night.

Fencing

A breathtaking garden is everyone's envy—including wildlife! While critters can be adorable, they sometimes enjoy feasting on our horticultural masterpieces a bit too much. Erecting fencing around your garden prevents these hungry visitors from causing damage while adding an eye-catching aesthetic element. Even if animals aren't an issue, fencing can still make a big impact on your garden and add to its visual appeal.

Rocks

Rocks add a natural and organic element to your landscape design. Use them as border edging along pathways, flower beds, or garden borders to define different areas, or create pathways using flat stones or pavers.

Accents

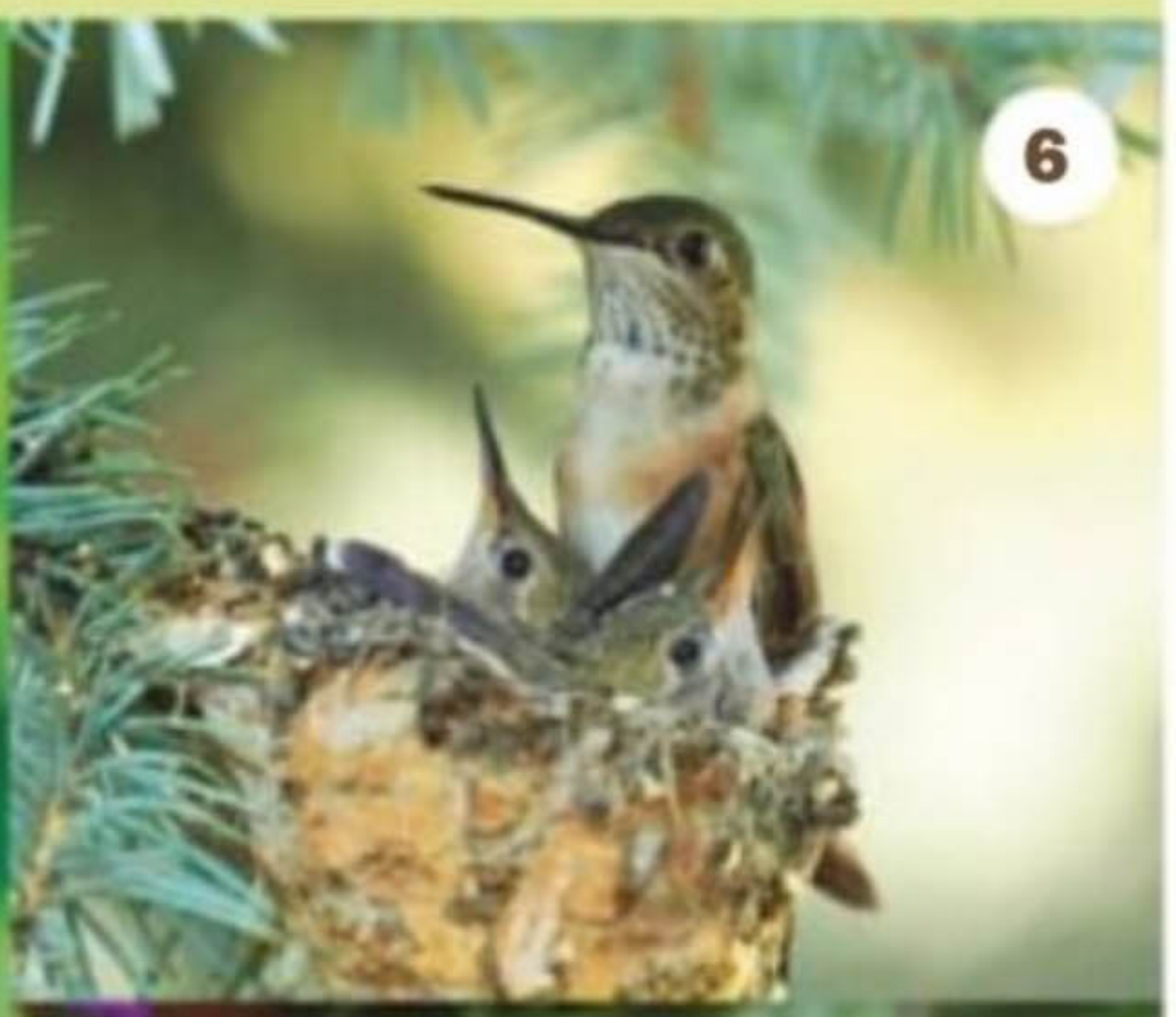
Some final touches can imbue a sense of whimsy. Consider statues peeking through foliage, trellises for climbing plants, or a small pond to offer tranquility.

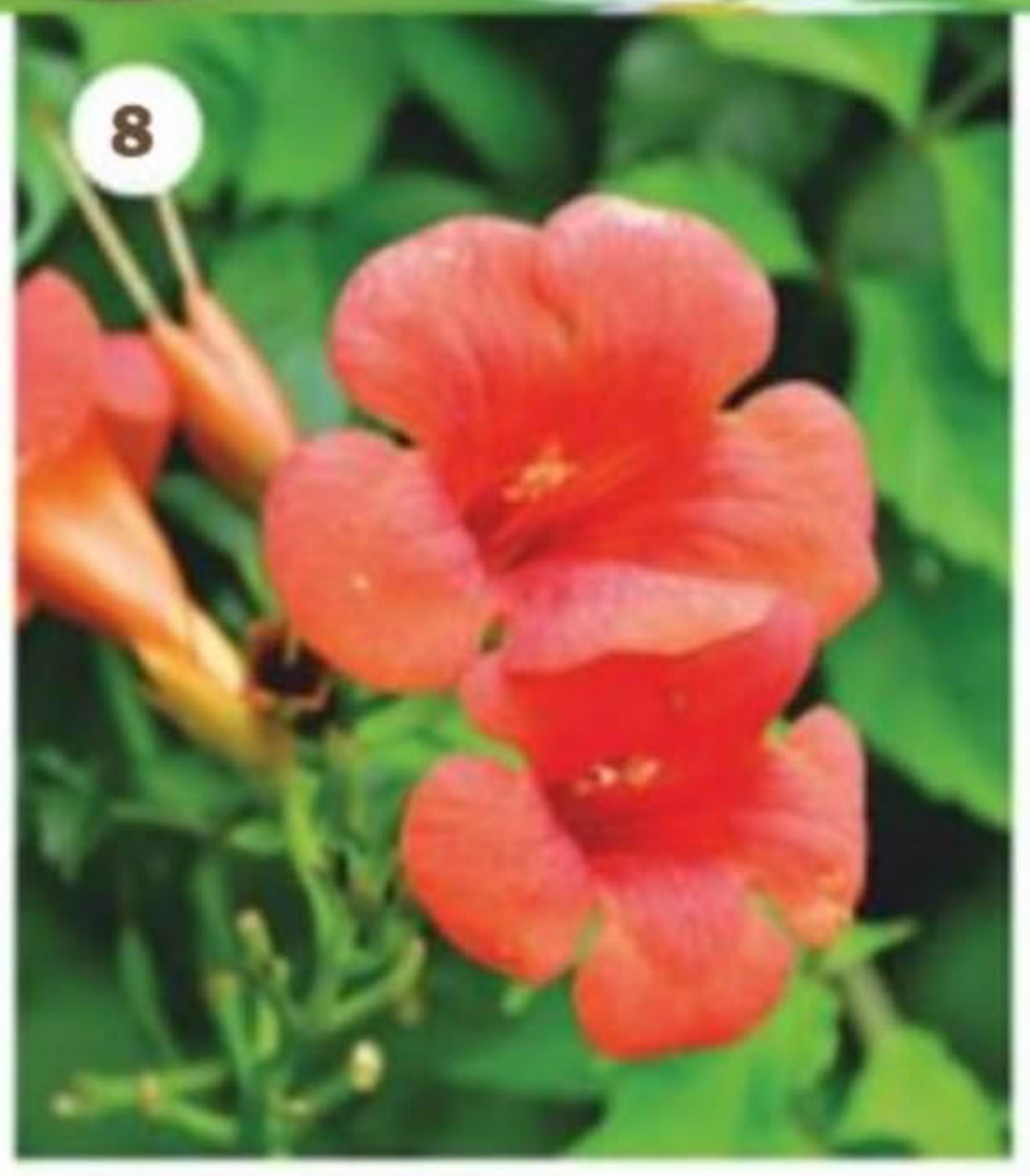
Plants with higher focal points, like this pink garden phlox, pair well with lower flowers.

Create a Pollinator Paradise

Bring your garden to life for beneficial bugs with native plants.

1 Hummingbirds, **2** honeybees, **3** butterflies, and **4** hover flies (they look like yellow jackets, but smaller, with no stinger) all help pollinate your plants.





5 Butterflies are attracted by water; **6** a mother hummingbird and her babies; **7** heliotrope attracts pollinators, as does **8** trumpet vine.

From busy bees to fluttering butterflies to busy hummingbirds, pollinators bring life and color to our gardens. Flying from flower to flower, they transfer pollen, enabling your plants to then produce fruits, seeds, and new plants. This process ensures genetic diversity and helps maintain healthy plant populations—yes, even in a simple backyard garden!

The secret to attracting these tiny but important creatures to your backyard: native plants, which are adapted to the local environment and often have specific characteristics that attract pollinators. As a bonus, native plants are also better adapted to local soil and climate conditions than non-native species. This adaptability results in lower water usage and less reliance on chemical fertilizers or pesticides. With some smart planting, you can transform your garden into a haven for pollinators and see just how enchanting your outdoor space can become.

Go Hyper-local

There's no one-size-fits-all list of native plants that will attract pollinators—it varies depending on where you live. Local experts at nearby gardening stores, horticultural societies, or native plant nurseries can point you in the right direction.

Be Picky

Hybridized plants may have reduced nectar or pollen production, making them less attractive to pollinators. Opt for heirloom or open-pollinated varieties instead.

Think Long-term

Include a variety of species that bloom at different times throughout the year so your visitors have a continuous source of nectar and pollen.

Be a Good Host

Provide shallow water sources, like a birdbath or saucer, for bees and butterflies to quench their thirst. Add some flat rocks for them to rest on. Hummingbirds will appreciate a mister or dripper for a quick drink.

Decorate

Include a variety of plants with different heights, textures, and structures in your garden. This will provide shelter, nesting sites, and hiding places for pollinators. Consider adding trees, shrubs, grasses, and even some dead wood or rocks.

Mix it Up

Pollinators are attracted to a wide range of colors, so include flowers in different hues such as purple, blue, yellow, and white. Also, consider planting flowers with different shapes (tubular, flat, or clustered blooms) to accommodate various pollinator species.

Make it a Group Project

Grouping flowers together in clusters makes it easier for pollinators to find them and increases the efficiency of their foraging trips.

Skip the Pesticides

These chemicals can be harmful or even deadly to pollinators, so try to instead opt for natural pest control methods, or use organic products if necessary.

Grab the Right Tools

From traditional essentials to innovative gadgets, these are garden tools you'll reach for again and again.

Even a green thumb could use an extra hand every now and then. Having the right tools in the garden not only saves you precious time and energy, but also helps ensure that your gardening work is top-notch. Each plant has its own needs, and using the appropriate tools helps you give them all the TLC they deserve.

Whether you're just getting started and need the basics or you're taking your gardening to the next level, these tools will help you blossom as a gardener.

The Essentials

1. Trowel and Hand Rake: Get a slightly curved blade to help scoopsoil, plus a straight edge for precise digging; a hard-tined hand rake loosens soil to make planting and weeding easier.

2. Pruner: Look for shears with sharp, precision-ground blades that can easily cut through your plants' branches without crushing or damaging them.

3. Gloves: Choose gloves with textured palms or fingers to provide a better grip on tools and plants, reducing the risk of accidental slips.

4. Watering Can: Look for a can with a long spout and an ergonomic handle for precise watering and reduced strain on your hand and wrist.

5. Rake: Opt for one with flexible tines that can adjust to follow different surfaces and angles, making it versatile for various tasks.

6. Garden Hoe: Pull weeds before they steal nutrients from your plants. Look for durable materials such as stainless or carbon steel and a solid handle.

Specialized Helpers and Innovative Extras

7. Japanese Garden Knife: This is the ultimate multipurpose tool for weeding, digging, and cutting. Opt for a knife with an ergonomic handle to provide a comfortable grip during longer use.

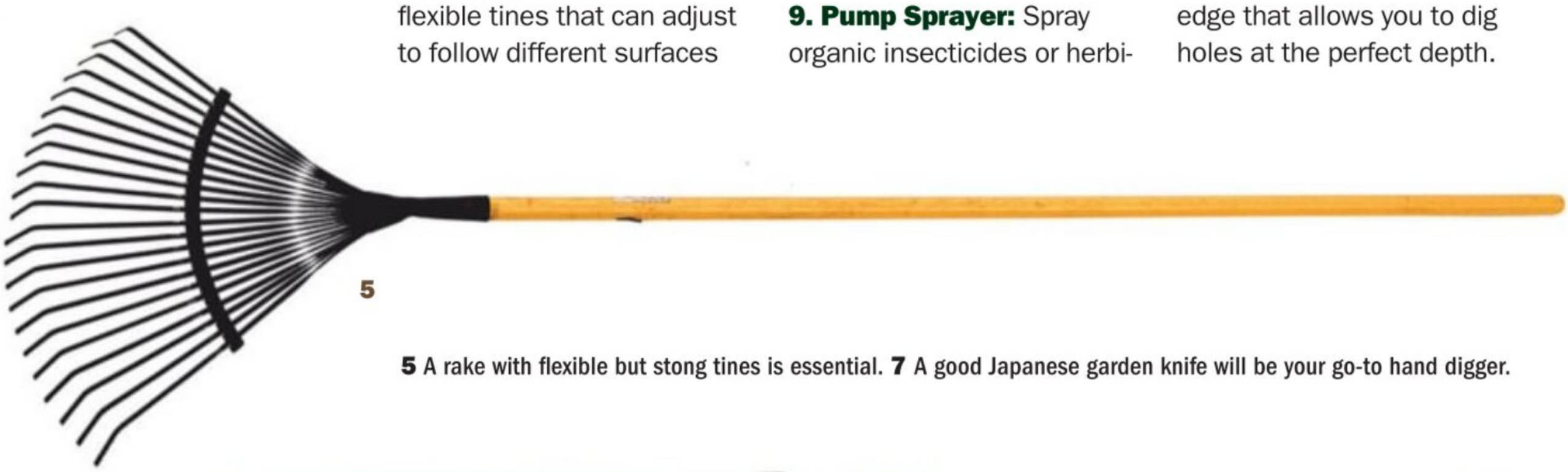
8. Kneepad: It's crucial to protect your knees during long hours of weeding and planting. Look for kneepads that are made with soft and cushioned materials, such as foam or gel padding.

9. Pump Sprayer: Spray organic insecticides or herbicides high into fruit trees or across the ground with ease. An adjustable nozzle and pressure control will help you control the spray pattern and intensity for specific areas and different types of plants.

10. Plant Monitoring Sensors: These handy devices measure various environmental factors such as light levels, temperature, humidity, and soil moisture.

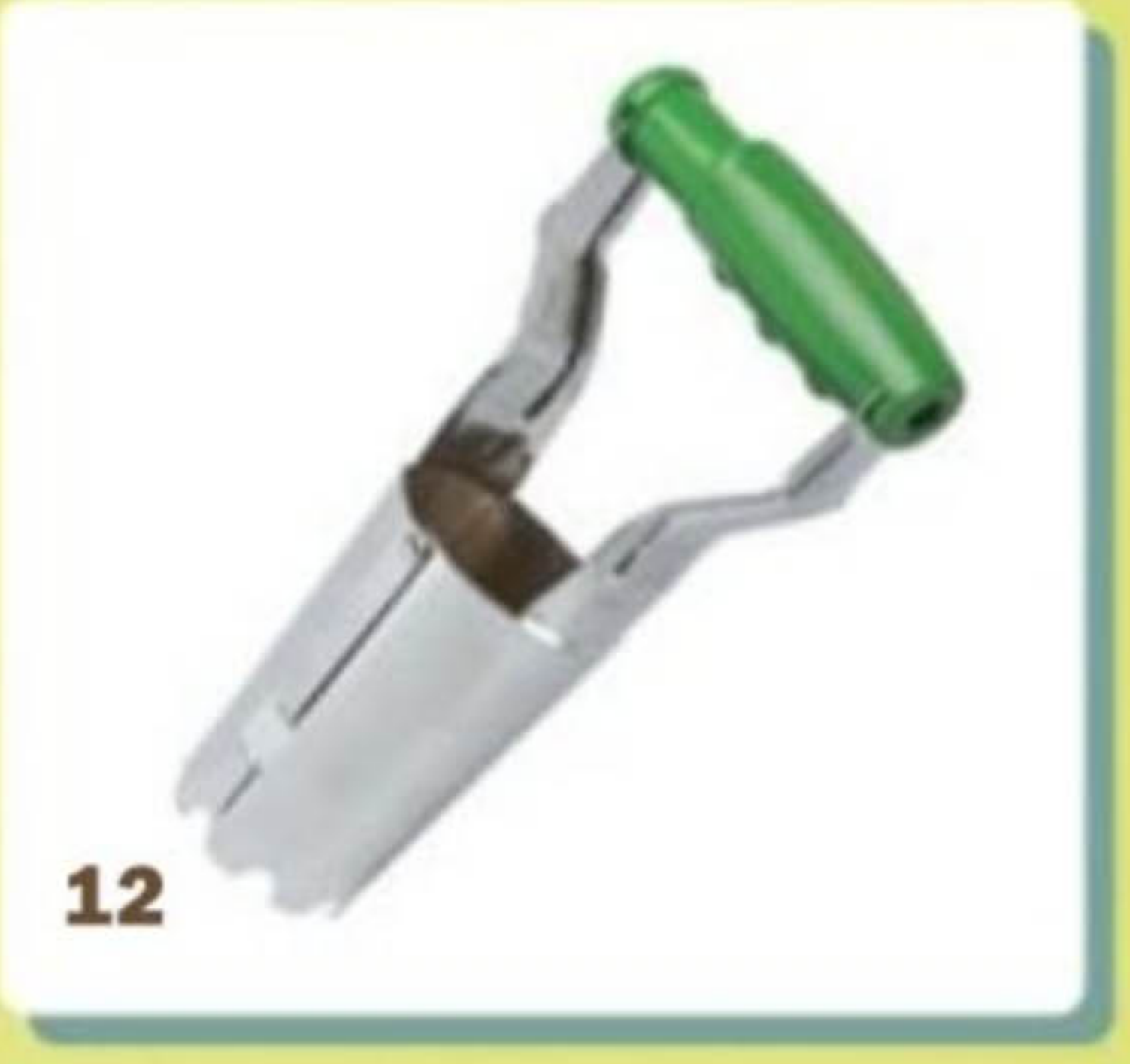
11. Smart Irrigation System: Modern sensors and weather data can help optimize watering schedules—these systems help ensure that your plants receive the right amount of water at the right time.

12. Bulb Planter: This specialized tool helps make planting bulbs foolproof, with a cylindrical shape and sharp edge that allows you to dig holes at the perfect depth.


5

1"
2"
3"
4"
5"
6"
25
50
75
100
125
150
mm
7

5 A rake with flexible but stong tines is essential. **7** A good Japanese garden knife will be your go-to hand digger.



Other essentials: **1** A strong trowel and hand rake, **2** sharp pruners, **3** durable gardening gloves, **4** a lightweight watering can, **6** a sturdy garden hoe, **8** a joint-saving kneepad, **9** a simple pump sprayer, **10** a soil monitoring sensor, **11** sprinkler hose attachments, and **12** a bulb planter.

Garden Goals

Draw your own gardening inspirations through these stunning gardens that set the bar high.

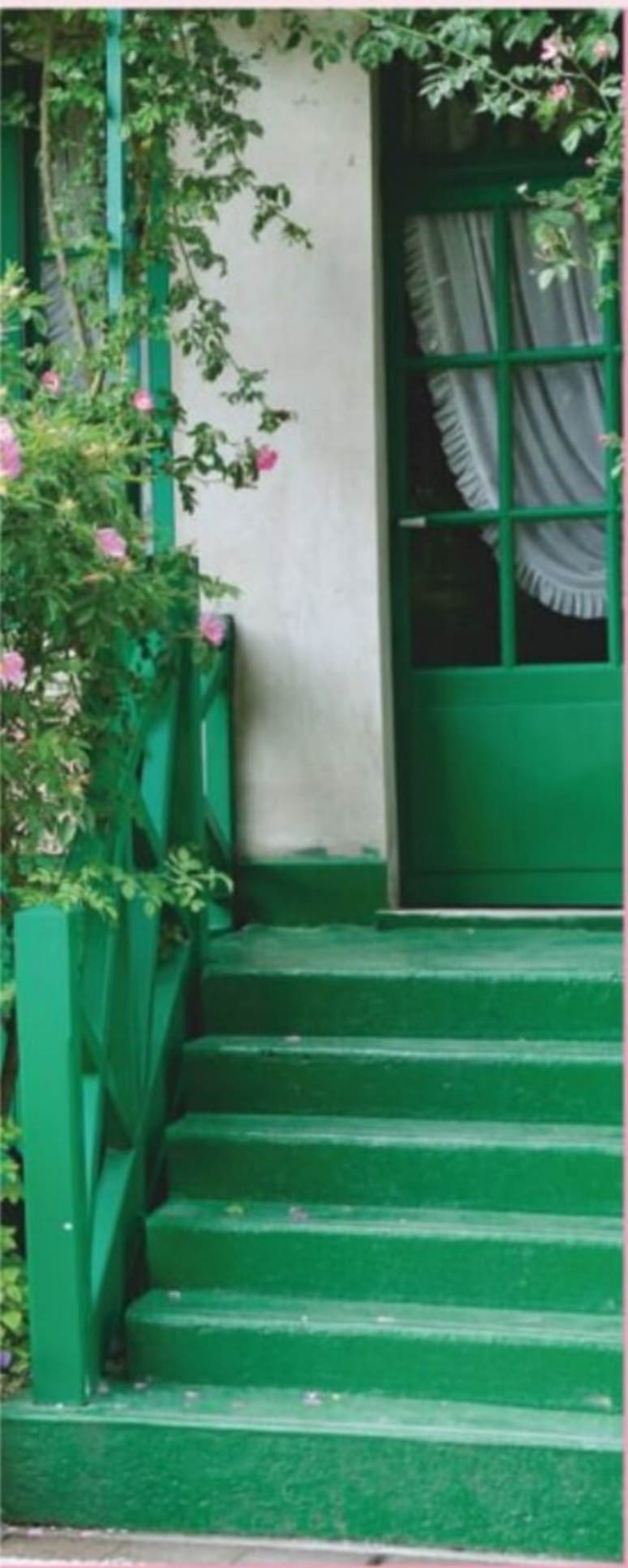
Rows of tulips in a range of colors curve through a field near Zaanstad village in the Netherlands.

You're unlikely to have space for fields of tulips, but following this massed planting technique with your own bulbs produces a powerful punch of color in spring.

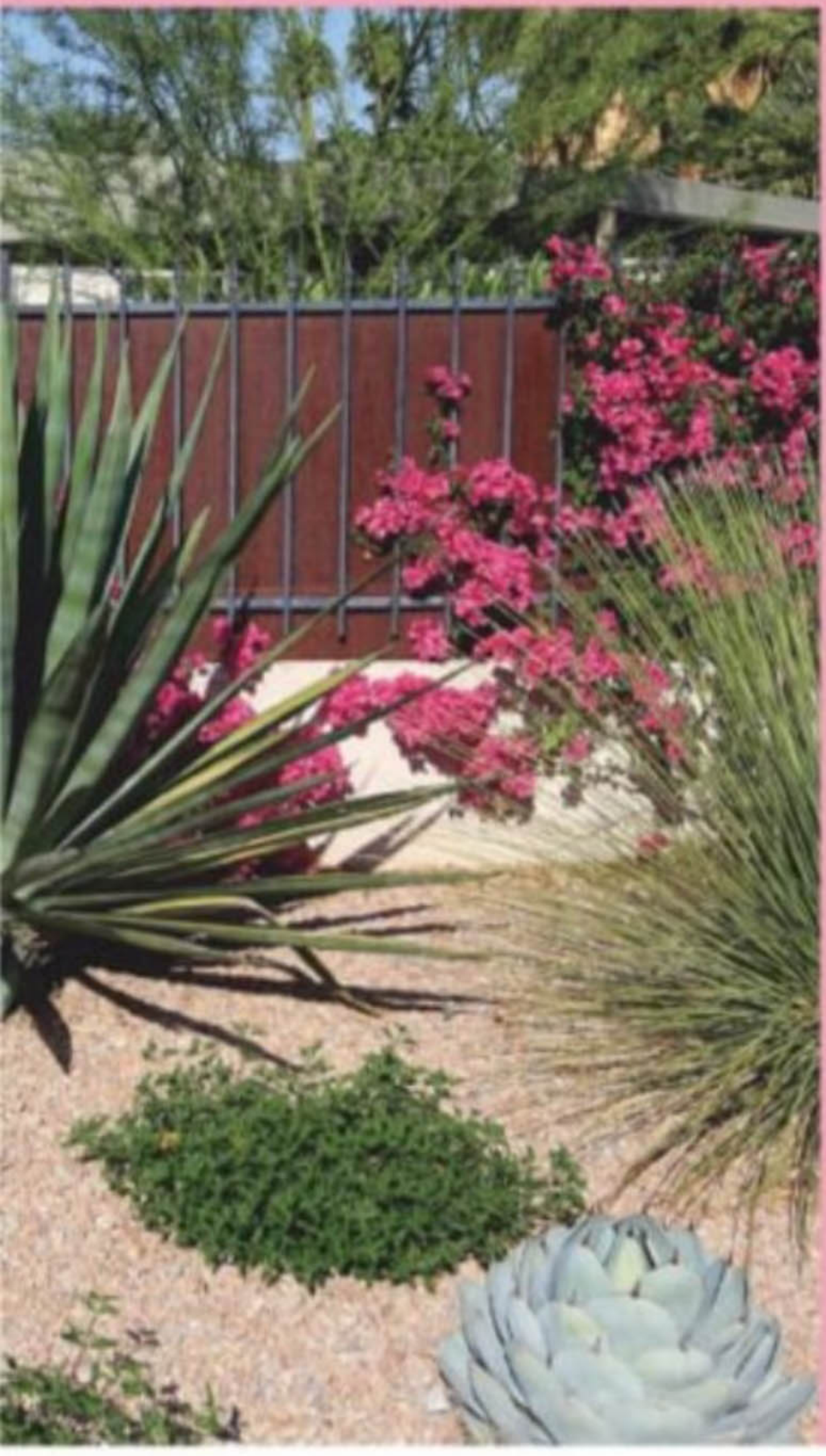
Flowers dot deep foliage outside Claude Monet's home in Normandy, France, showcasing a the power of a more natural look.

Complement, don't compete with, natural beauty: This stunning ocean view in St. Ives, England adds wild-looking pink sea thrift.

Desert climates don't have to mean drab: Cactus, succulents, and bougainvillea splash color throughout this arid garden.



A bright stone path garden fan feel stark; here deep red hues in the flowers and foliage soften the effect to create an inviting feel.



Boxwoods handle shaping well for a formal look (as in this German garden), but be sure to balance with natural plantings, too.

Once you have your tools ready and your plot of land set aside, it's time to plunge in!

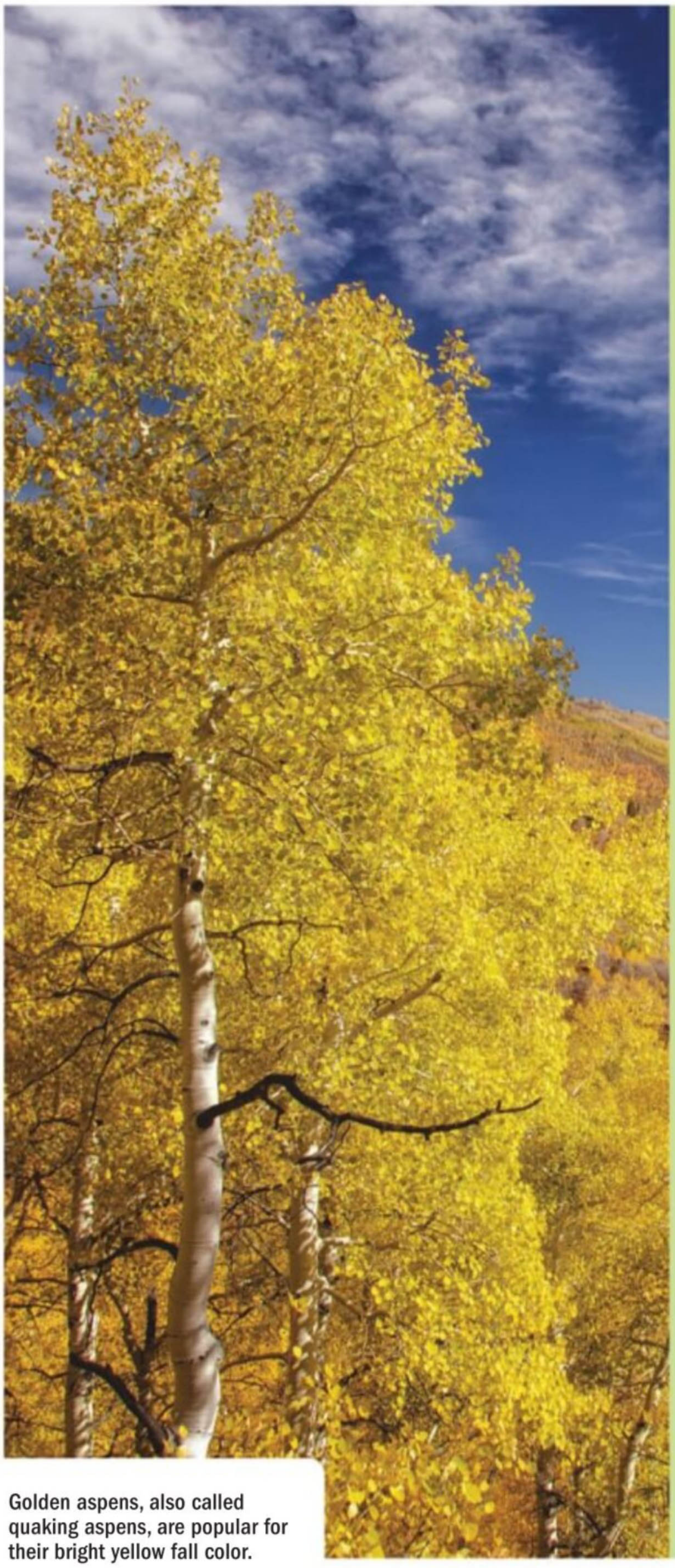
Breaking Ground

You don't have to have a green thumb to plant like a pro and create a garden that wows.

Roll up your sleeves and grab your gardening tools! It's time to get your hands—or at least your gloves—dirty. Whether you're planting lush greenery, creating a fragrant floral oasis, or growing fruits and vegetables for culinary delights, you can give your garden the best chance of thriving with some clever techniques for managing sunlight and soil, choosing the right plants, and arranging your space. Watch the magic unfold as you nurture new life and watch your garden flourish with vibrant colors, delicious flavors, and the sense of fulfillment that comes from growing your own natural paradise.

Branch Out With Trees

Adding visual height and a foliage canopy can take your yard from eyesore to oasis overnight.



Golden aspens, also called quaking aspens, are popular for their bright yellow fall color.

Spruce trees have fragrant needles; there are tons of varieties from Blue to Sitka to Picea.

1

2

3

1 Measure your root ball's diameter before you dig up any ground.

2 Dig a hole at least three times as wide as the root ball so the roots have room to spread out.

3 Place the root ball in the center, water it, and then fill in the rest of the hole with a mix of soil and compost.

A row of tall, evergreen arborvitae can create a "green wall," or visual fence for privacy.

Planting trees may seem like a daunting task, but with minimal care, you can bring their natural beauty and wow factor into your home garden.

Make Room

Your tree needs room for its roots to grow; a tight space may stress it out. A widespread misconception is that trees need deep holes to flourish; in reality, most tree roots expand horizontally rather than vertically. Make sure your hole is three times as wide as the root ball with a depth matching its current container or, if it's bare-rooted, the length of its root system. The tree's trunk flare should still be visible after it's planted. Hold off on adding fertilizer to the soil at this early stage, as that can actually encourage roots to stay confined—you want them to venture out. Plan ahead to ensure easy access to the tree, with enough space left for pruning, watering, and other care activities. A good rule of thumb: The space between trees (or between a tree and your house) should be two-thirds of its listed mature width.

Imagine the Future

Consider the tree's growth rate and its size at maturity (both height and width) and the purpose of the tree. Are you looking to create shade? Consider placing trees on the south or west side of your home to provide relief from the sun (and high air conditioning bills) during hot summer months. Want privacy? Select a fast-growing tree with dense foliage (evergreen trees are often preferred because they retain their foliage year-round).

Pick the Right Time

Timing truly does matter when it comes to planting trees. Early spring, just before the buds burst forth, is an ideal time to plant for most species. Autumn can also offer favorable conditions with its cooler temperatures and beneficial rain showers that help roots establish themselves. Research your tree species and the best time to plant it to ensure its optimal growth.

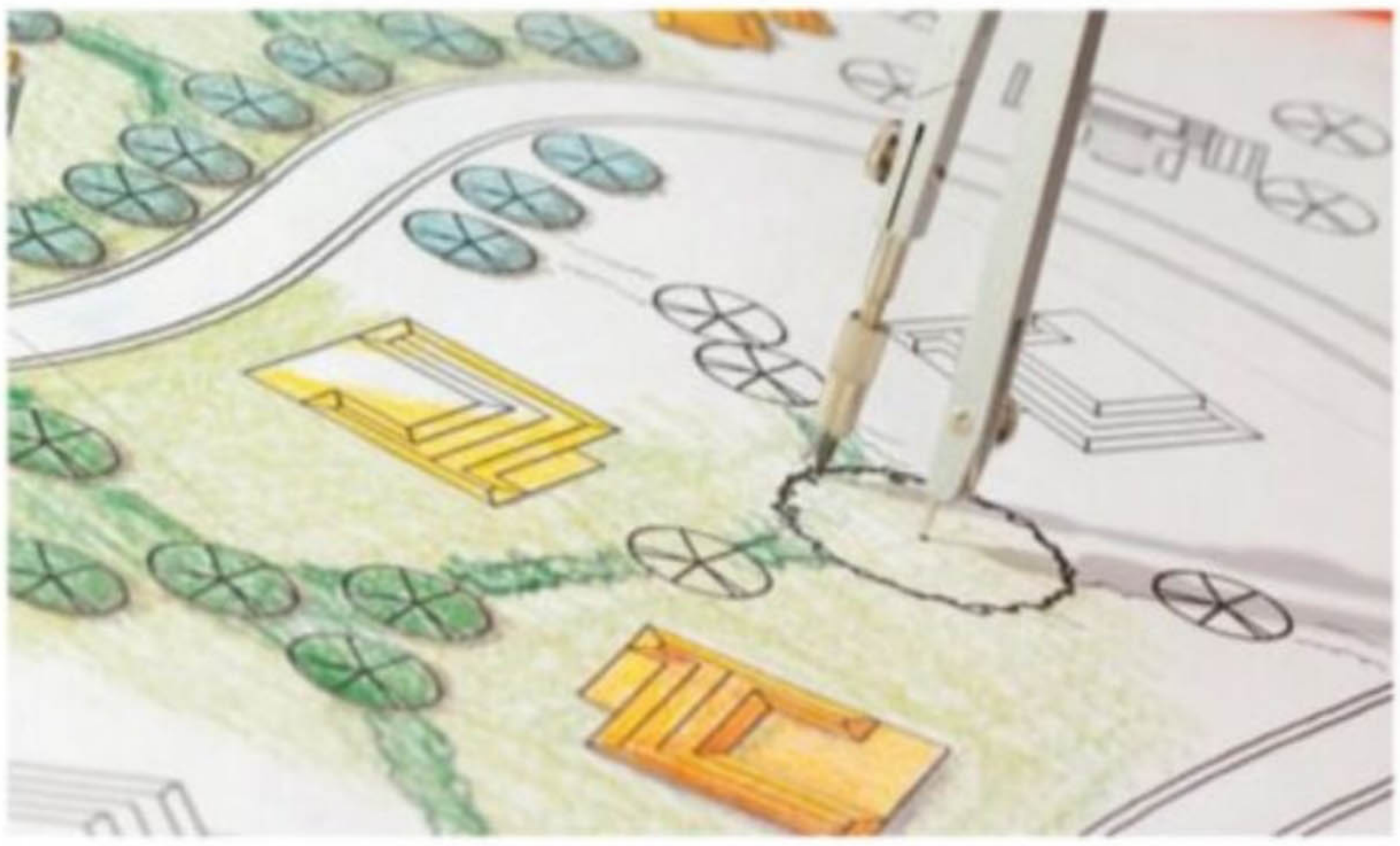
Water the Root Ball

If you're getting trees from a nursery, it's likely to have a root ball—a compacted mass of roots and soil that surrounds the tree's root system. Don't forget to water this root ball before you plant it; trees' root systems spread out from the base of the trunk, so watering the root ball helps deliver moisture directly to these roots. If you're planting a tree with a burlapped root ball, leave the burlap intact as much as possible. The upper portion of the burlap can be removed or folded down once the tree is properly positioned in the planting hole.

Hydrate Early

Consistent deep waterings in the initial weeks are crucial, as they encourage the roots to become established. Then, depending on the tree species, climatic conditions, and soil type, adjust the watering frequency according to specific needs.

The spring and fall seasons are generally seen as the best times to plant trees.

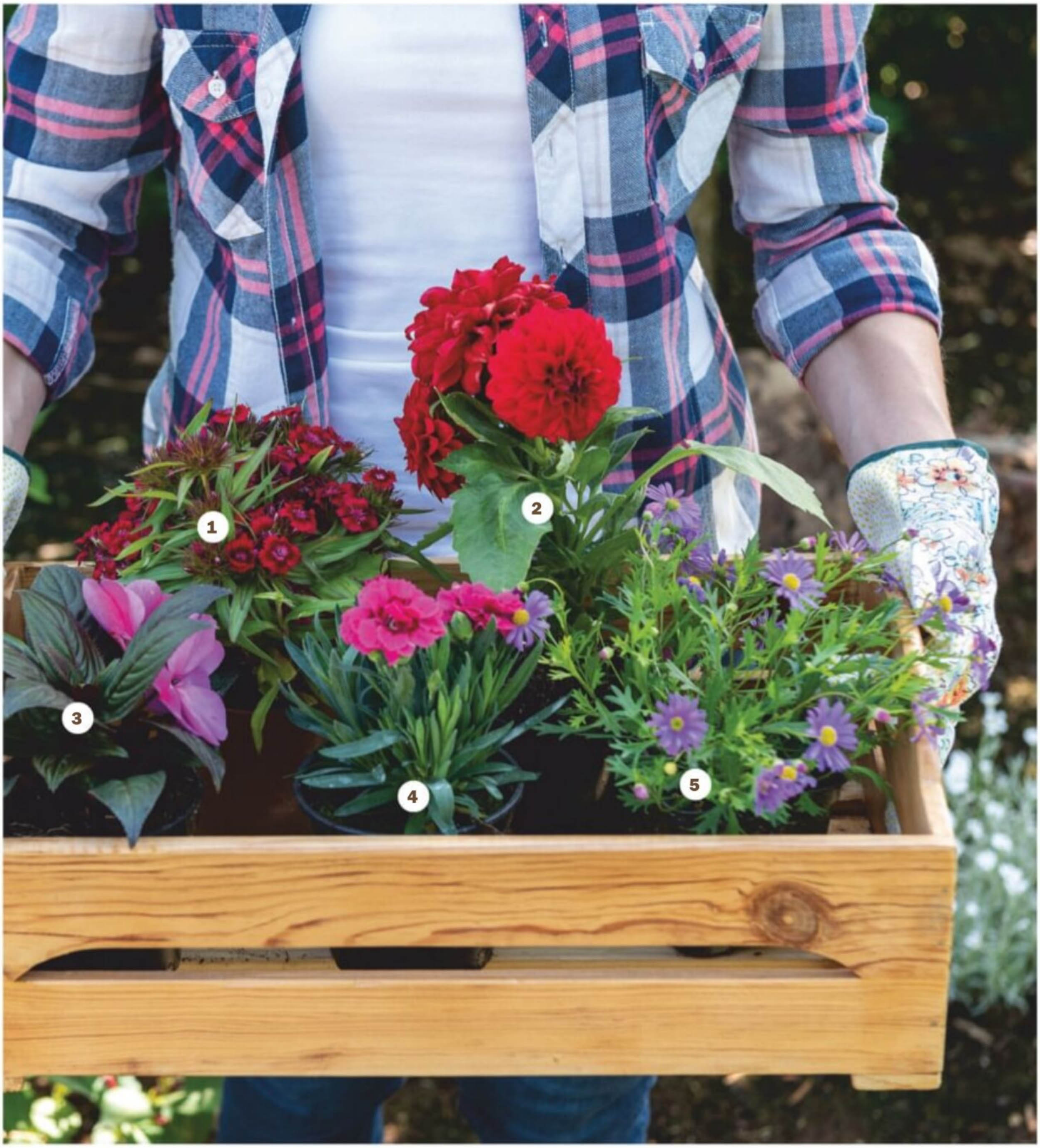


Consider the mature size of each tree when planning your garden.

Give new trees a deep watering.

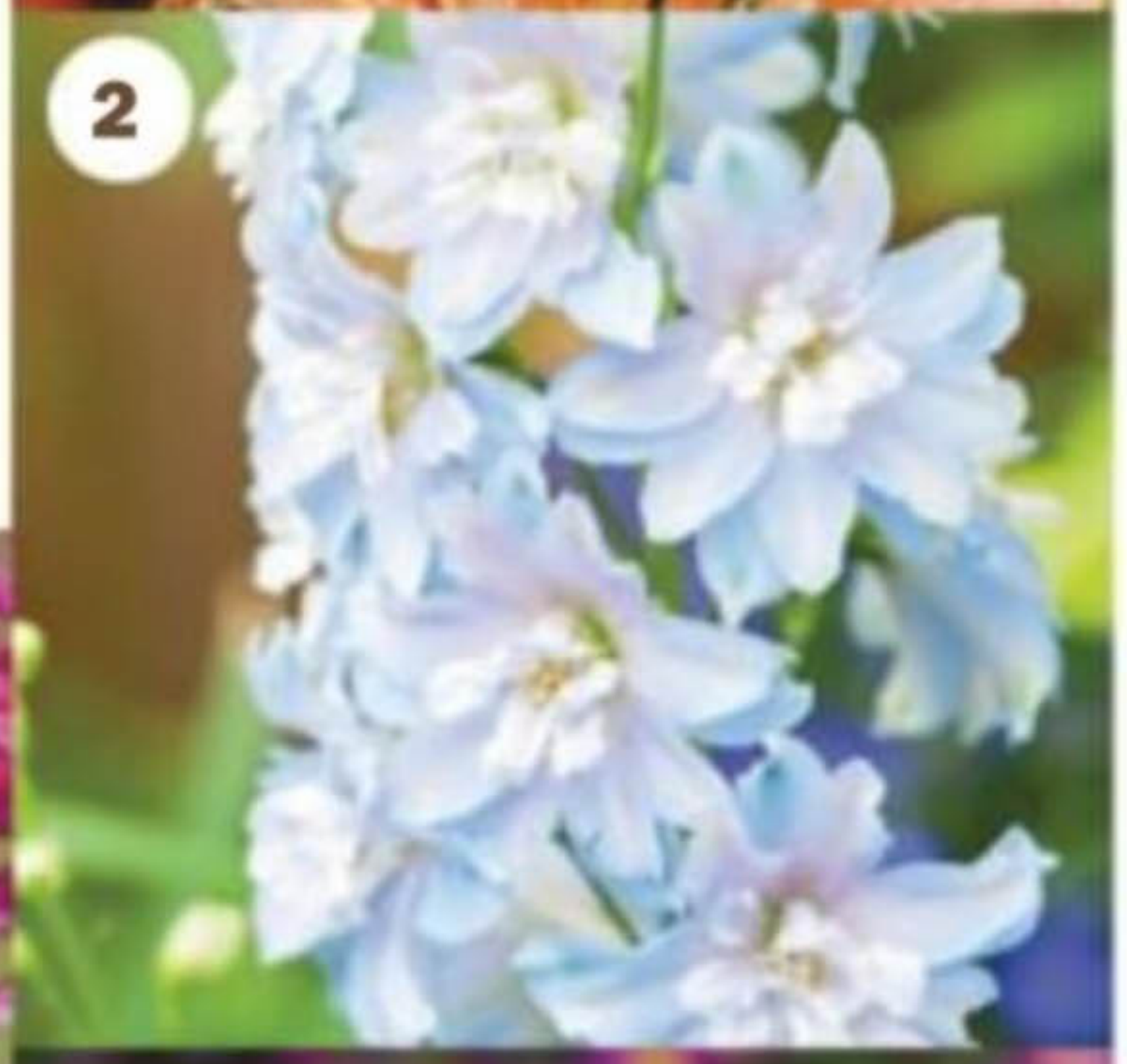
Bring the Bloom

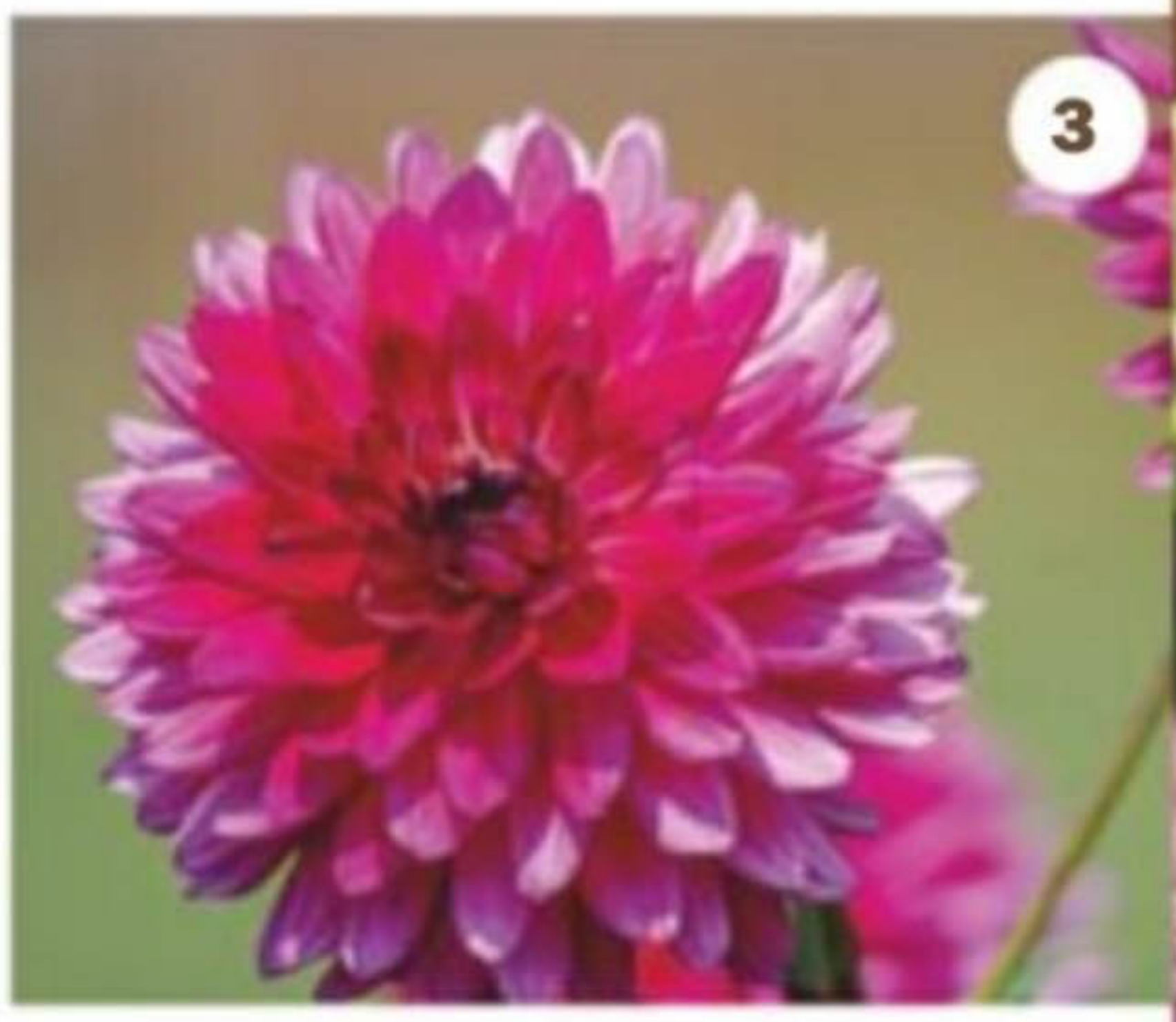
Transform your yard's appeal with colorful flowers.

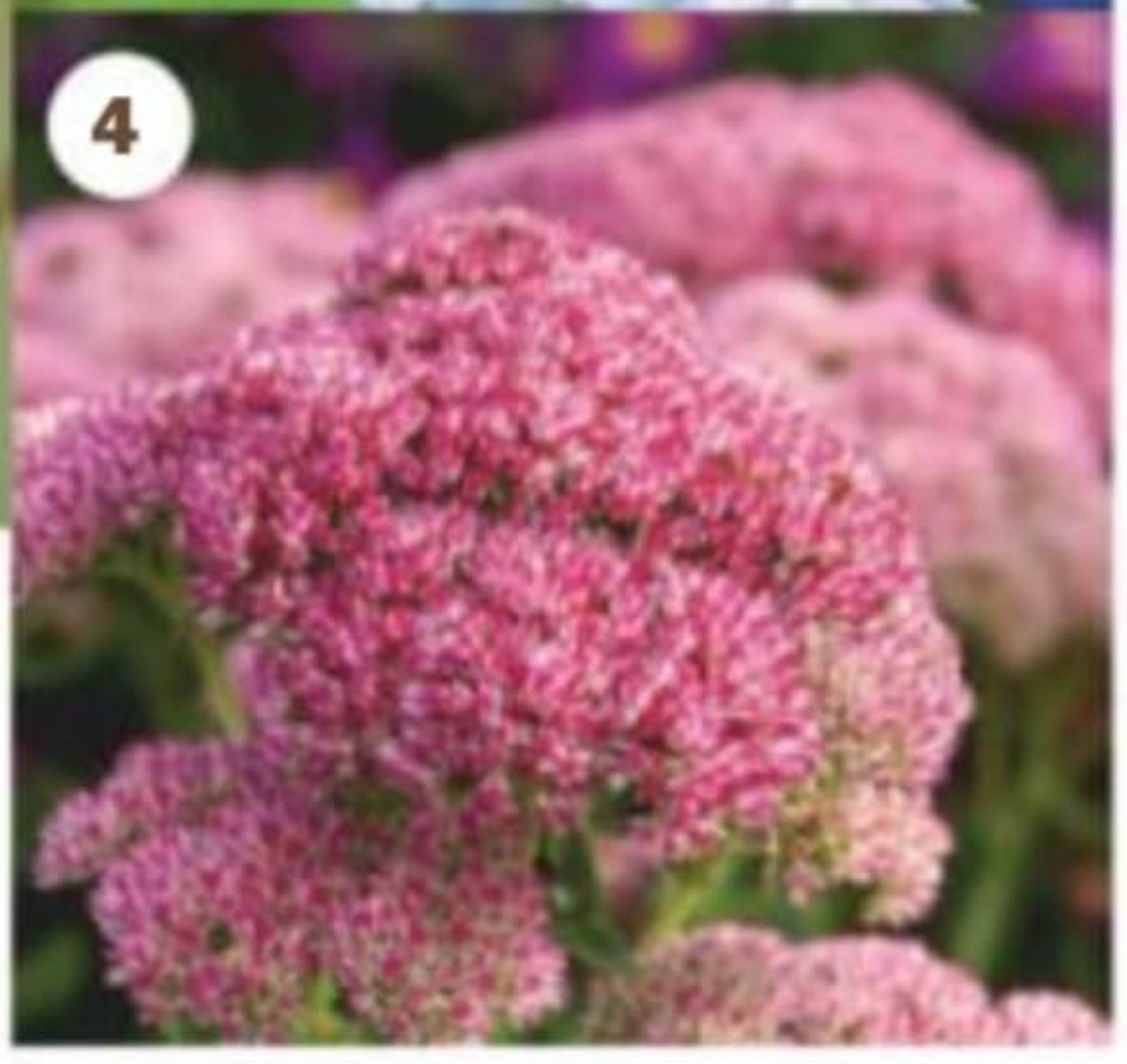


1 Small dianthus **2** Dahlia **3** New Guinea impatiens **4** Larger carnation-type dianthus **5** Aster

(left) Remove weeds before planting, then handle roots with care to avoid damaging them.







1 Peach daylilies
2 Soft blue delphinium
3 Dahlia
4 Stonecrop

Who doesn't want a touch of enchantment right in their own backyard? The key lies in adding vibrant, beautiful flowers to your garden. Just know that planting flowers can require a bit more care and specialized efforts when compared to other plants—but with the tips below, you'll be painting your backyard with gorgeous hues in no time.

Look Beyond Looks

It's tempting to pick flowers based solely on their beauty, but remember: what blooms in your friend's garden might not bloom in yours. Consider factors such as sun exposure, climate, optimal growing season, and space before setting your heart on specific flowers. Understanding the type of soil and pH level you're working with are also crucial elements. Each flower species thrives in certain conditions; knowing these details can make all the difference.

Prepare the Soil

Before you start planting, loosen the soil with a garden tiller, remove any rocks and weeds, and add in some organic matter like compost or well-rotted manure to improve the soil's drainage and general health.

Handle the Roots With Care

If your plant has a root ball, carefully lift the flower plant from its current location or container, supporting the root ball with your hands. Examine the root ball for any damaged or diseased roots. If you notice any, trim them using clean, sharp pruning shears. If the root ball is covered in natural burlap, it can be left in place or partially removed. If the roots look tightly bound or circling around the root ball, it's best to remove as much of the burlap as possible to encourage proper root growth.

Provide Some Support

Some taller or more delicate flowers will need support to grow strong and healthy without breaking under the weight of their blooms. In this case, you can consider incorporating stakes, hoops, or cages to help your blooms reach their full potential. When providing support to your flowering plant, make sure not to tie the stems too tightly, as this can restrict their growth and cause damage. Use soft materials like garden twine or plant ties to secure the stems, and regularly check and adjust the support as the plant grows.

Rotate Your Blooms

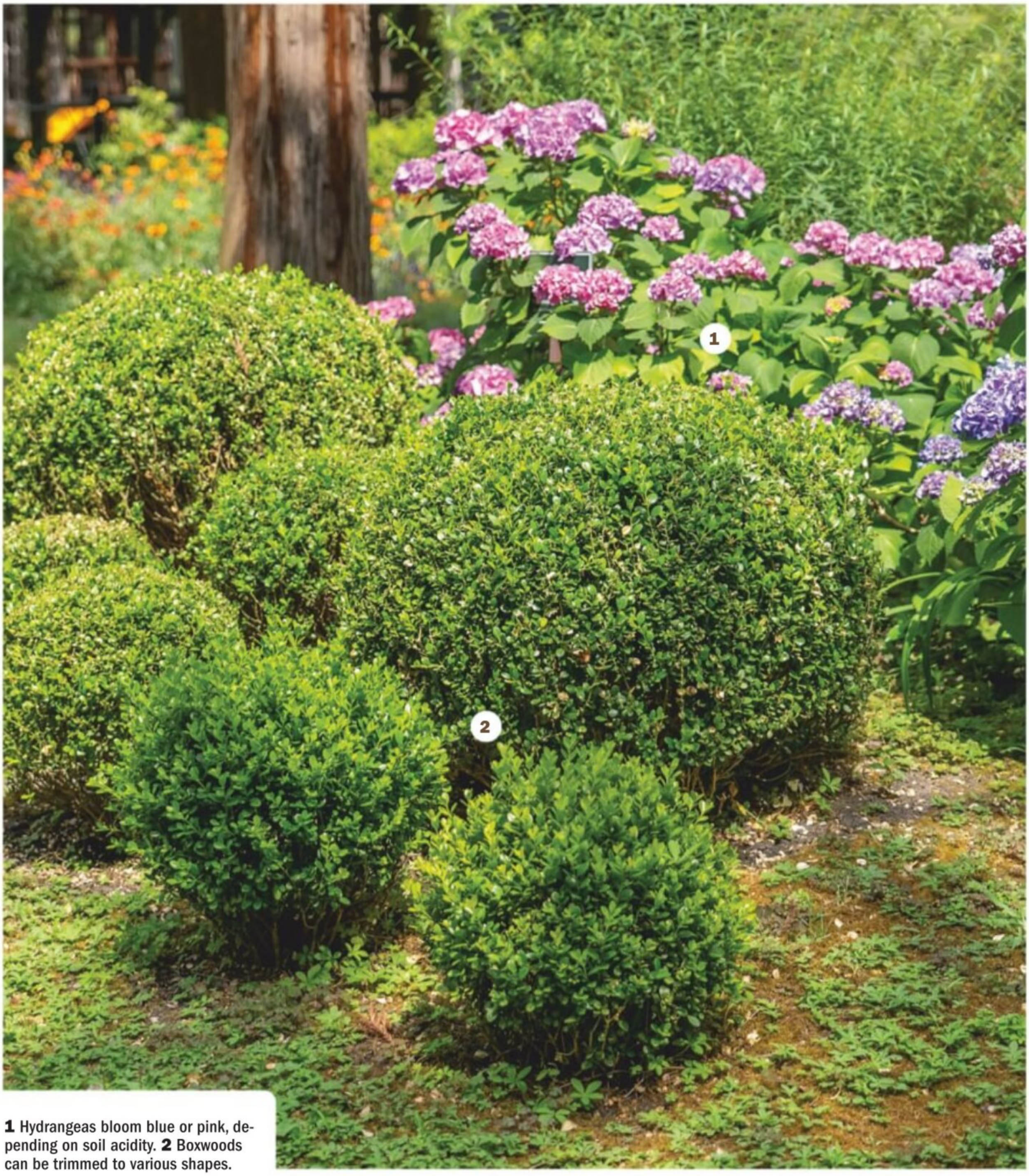
Some flowers bloom best during cooler months, while others flourish in warm weather. To ensure your garden has continuous blooming potential all year round, research which flower varieties thrive in each season and stagger your planting accordingly. Rotating your flowering plants can provide a continuous display of colors—which is particularly effective when you are short on space.

Fertilize Well

While it's true that most plants can subsist only on the nutrients that are already present in the soil, choosing to occasional treat them to fertilizer will make your blooms extra brilliant and longer lasting. Strive for balance by avoiding excessive amounts of nitrogen, which can lead to lush foliage (rather than flowers) as well as certain species of mites and insects that can harm your garden. Stick with organic nourishment like compost or bone meal for a sustainable garden.

Join the Shrub Club

Fill your garden backdrop with lush greenery.



1 Hydrangeas bloom blue or pink, depending on soil acidity. **2** Boxwoods can be trimmed to various shapes.

Pack down the soil you add around the root ball to make sure the plant is secure.

With the sturdiness and space-filling presence of trees but the versatility and vitality of smaller plants, shrubs can offer the best of both worlds. Embrace the potential hidden in a garden full of shrubs with these helpful tips.

Plan Ahead

Planting shrubs during their dormant season—for most varieties, this means early spring or fall—gives them the best chance of success, as they'll have ample time to adapt to their new home and develop strong root systems before facing heat or frost. Before you pick up a shovel, consider the location where you plan to plant your shrubs. Observe your yard throughout the day and note how the sunlight moves across it; pay attention to structures, like fences or pergolas, that can provide support for shrubs like climbing roses; and group plants according to similar water and sunlight needs. (You don't want to place a thirsty hydrangea next to a drought-tolerant juniper, for example.)

Go for Seasonal Variety

Unlike many plants that are best in one specific season, many shrubs offer multi-season appeal—a few can go a long way, and they oftentimes make an impact for longer each year. Think beyond spring and summer blooms; choose an array of deciduous and evergreen species and seek out varieties that sport impressive fall foliage or striking winter silhouettes so that your garden remains visually stunning throughout the seasons.

Create Clusters

Planting shrubs in irregular clusters creates a more natural and diverse habitat for pollinators like bees and butterflies. By clustering the shrubs, you increase the chances of attracting a variety of pollinators, which can lead to better pollination and increased fruit or flower production. Their interconnected root systems can also help stabilize the soil, controlling erosion.

Layer Up

Shrubs can add depth, texture, and visual interest to your outdoor space, especially if you're strategically arranging shrubs of varying heights and forms. To create a dynamic landscape design, place taller shrubs towards the back or center of the planting area, and gradually decrease the height as you move towards the front or edges of the garden. This creates a visually appealing backdrop and ensures that all of your shrubs receive adequate sunlight.

Size 'em Up

When planting shrubs, dig holes twice as wide as the nursery container and just as deep. Gently loosen the roots with your fingers and position the plant in the hole so that it aligns with the depth of its original container. If your soil has poor drainage, add some nutritious backfill soil to the bottom of the hole first, in order to raise your shrub height by two or three inches.

Give the Root Ball Some TLC

Shrubs, especially when newly planted, rely on their root systems to anchor them securely in the soil. The root ball plays a crucial role in providing stability and nutrient uptake for the shrub, so when planting or transplanting a shrub, it's important to handle the root ball with care to avoid damaging it. This includes ensuring that it's properly hydrated before planting and avoiding excessive disturbance or breaking apart of the roots.

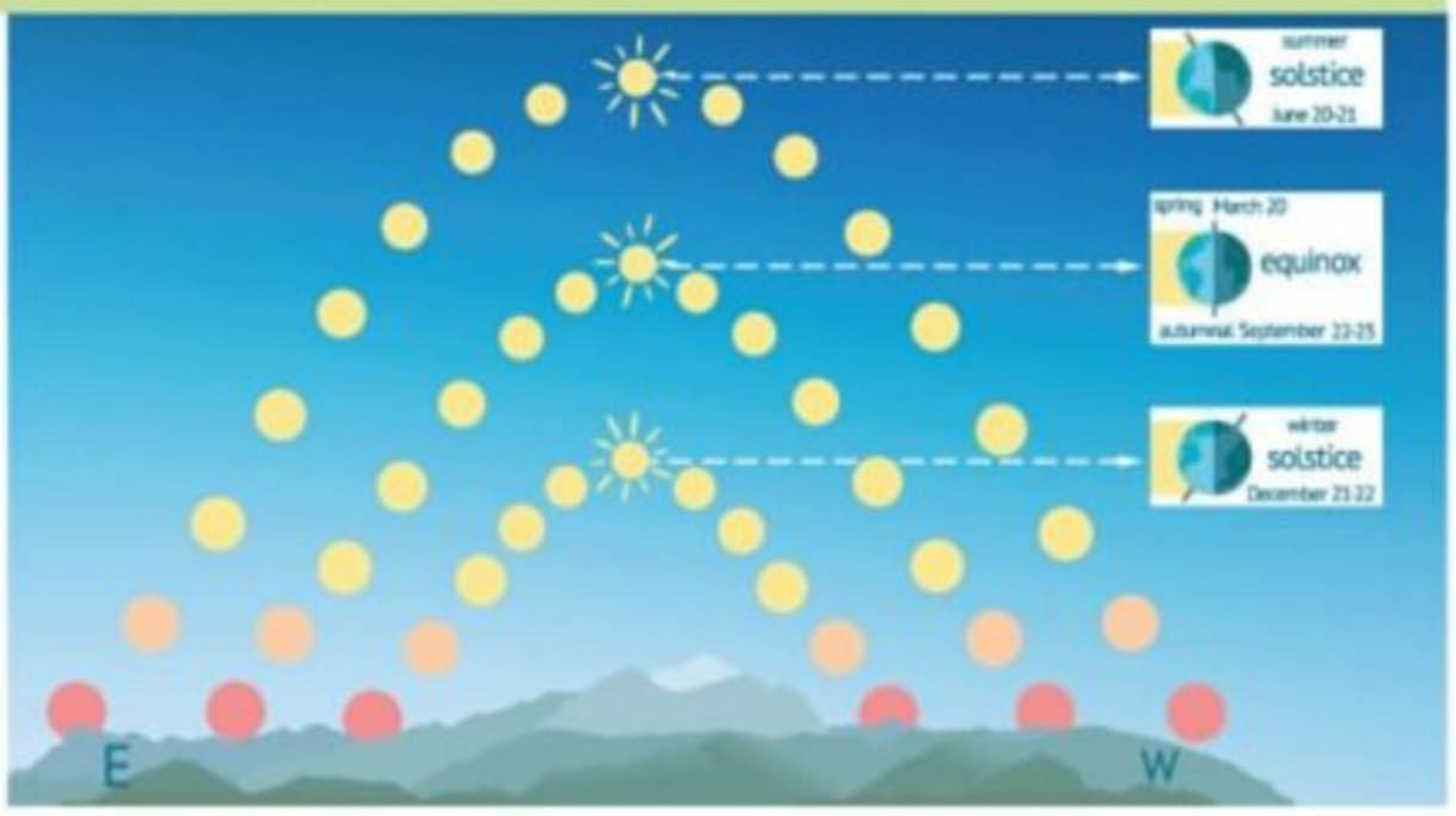
1 Tropical Bougainvillea is stunning. **2** Juniper offers up ripe blue berries. **3** Roses offer a range of colors. **4** Azaleas, normally pink, stun in purple.

Produce truly never tastes better than when you can harvest it fresh from your own garden.

Find Victory in a Vegetable Garden

From seeds to harvest, how to get delicious produce from your own backyard.

Imagine stepping outside your back door and plucking ripe, juicy tomatoes straight from the vine; picture the satisfaction of serving your family a meal made with fresh, organic vegetables you grew yourself. Planting a vegetable garden in your backyard offers countless benefits, from saving money on groceries to knowing exactly where your food comes from. And the best part? It's easier than you think!



Keep track of the summer and winter solstice dates (in addition to your area's frost dates) to know when it's best to plant.

Foundations for Success

Starting with the right plan will ensure that your vegetable garden is, well, fruitful.

Soil: Pick a spot with good drainage; know your soil type and pH levels (there are soil tests available at your local garden store) to ensure you're providing your plants with optimal conditions for growth. The ideal soil texture for vegetable gardening is loamy, which is a mix of sand, silt, and clay, with a slightly acidic to neutral pH range between 6.0 and 7.0. Amend your soil as needed.

Location, Location, Location: Map out your plot and decide what vegetables you'd like to grow. Select a spot in your yard that receives about six to eight hours of sunlight per day, has good drainage, and is away from large trees or structures that may shade the garden. When planning your vegetable placement, consider factors like plant height, spacing requirements, and companion planting (where certain plants benefit each other when grown together—see page 50).

Timing: Grab your calendar. Understanding which vegetables thrive in different seasons can help you plan your garden and maximize your crop harvest. In general, vegetables are categorized into three main groups based on their preferred growing season: cool-season crops, warm-season crops, and year-round crops. Knowing the average first and last frost dates in your area will also help you determine when to start planting each type of crop.

Cool-season vegetables prefer cooler temperatures and can be planted in early spring or fall. Some examples include lettuce, spinach, kale, broccoli, carrots, radishes, and peas. These crops can tolerate light frost and often have a shorter growing period.

Warm-season vegetables thrive in warmer temperatures and should be planted after the last frost date in your area. They require longer days and higher temperatures to grow successfully. Examples of warm-season crops include tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, beans, corn, and melons.

Year-round vegetables can be grown throughout the year in mild climates, or with the help of protective measures like greenhouses or row covers. These include herbs like parsley and cilantro, as well as certain leafy greens like Swiss chard and kale.

It's worth noting that some vegetables can be grown as both cool-season and warm-season crops depending on your location. For example, lettuce can sometimes be grown in the spring as a cool-season crop or in the summer as a shade-tolerant crop.

Popular & Beginner-Friendly Vegetables

Some vegetables are known for being easier to cultivate, making them ideal for beginners or those with limited gardening experience. Consider choosing some of these popular options to get yourself started:

Radishes: With a short growing season, radishes can be harvested in as little as three to four weeks after planting.

Planting Pointer:
Plant radish seeds directly in the garden bed, about half an inch deep and one inch apart. Keep the soil consistently moist for optimal germination and growth.

Salad Greens: Lettuce, spinach, and other salad greens are relatively easy to grow. They can be grown from seeds or seedlings and are often ready for harvest within a few weeks.

Planting Pointer:
Sow lettuce and spinach seeds in well-drained soil, about a quarter-inch deep. Thin out seedlings (by snipping crowded seedling sprouts) to allow enough space for the plants to grow. Harvest outer leaves as needed to encourage the plant's continuous growth.

Zucchini: Zucchini plants are known for their productivity and resilience. They tend to produce an abundance of fruits, and the plants are generally hardy and easy to care for.

Planting Pointer:
Start zucchini seeds indoors or plant them right in the garden—but after the last frost date. Plant them about one inch deep and three feet apart to allow for their sprawling growth habit.

Cucumbers: Cucumbers are fast-growing and generally low-maintenance plants. They thrive in warm weather and produce an abundance of crisp cucumbers throughout the growing season.

Planting Pointer:
Plant cucumber seeds directly in the garden after all danger of frost has passed. Create mounds or hills of soil and sow several seeds per mound, thinning them out later to leave only the strongest plants.

Tomatoes: While tomatoes require a bit more attention than some other vegetables, they are still considered relatively easy to grow. With proper support, regular watering, and sunlight, tomato plants can yield a bountiful harvest.

Planting Pointer:
Start tomato seeds indoors six to eight weeks before the last frost date or purchase seedlings from a nursery. Transplant them into well-drained soil, burying the stem partially to encourage strong root development.

Green Beans: Green beans are low-maintenance and produce a generous harvest. They can be grown from seeds and require minimal care, making them easy even for novice gardeners.

Planting Pointer:
Plant green bean seeds directly in the garden after the last frost date, about one inch deep and three inches apart. Provide support such as trellises or stakes for climbing varieties.

Carrots: Carrots are root vegetables that can be grown easily in loose soil with good drainage. They require consistent moisture but otherwise need little attention while growing.

Planting Pointer:
Sow carrot seeds directly in loose, sandy soil that is free of rocks or clumps. Plant them about a quarter-inch deep and thin out seedlings to allow enough space for root development.

Peas: Peas are cool-season crops that are relatively simple to grow from seeds. They prefer cooler temperatures and can tolerate light frosts, making them suitable for early spring or fall planting.

Planting Pointer:
Plant pea seeds directly in ths soil, about an inch deep and two inches apart. Provide support such as trellises or stakes for climbing varieties and keep the soil consistently moist.

Swiss Chard: Swiss chard is a highly nutritious, leafy green vegetable that is easy to grow. It's tolerant of various weather conditions and can be harvested continuously throughout the season.

Planting Pointer:
Sow Swiss chard seeds directly in well-drained soil, about half an inch deep and six inches apart. Thin out seedlings to ensure proper spacing and harvest outer leaves as needed.

Plant Your Own Herb Garden

Add a handful of freshly picked basil leaves to your pasta sauce, or garnish dinner with fragrant rosemary sprigs. Growing an herb garden is hugely rewarding—and fairly easy, thanks to herbs' low-maintenance, resilient, and adaptable nature. Bonus: they grow fast, so you can enjoy them ASAP.

1. Choose a spot in your garden. Most herbs thrive in full sun, but some prefer shade. Do your research before you plant.

2. Prepare the soil. Herbs typically prefer well-drained soil; amend your soil with organic matter such as compost or aged manure if needed.

3. Dig holes that are slightly larger than the root ball of each plant, then place them in the holes at the same depth as they were in their original containers. Space them according to their specific requirements, usually six to 12 inches apart.

4. Water thoroughly to help your herbs establish their roots. Keep the soil moist as much as you can, but not waterlogged.

5. As your herbs grow, you can start harvesting them by snipping off the leaves or stems. Leave some leaves on the plant to support its continued growth.

Herbs like rosemary, oregano, basil, bay leaves, and peppermint are easy to grow and incorporate into your kitchen.

1 A bamboo trellis can work well for many climbing vegetables. **2** You can incorporate climbing structures into raised garden beds. **3** Caterpillars on a leaf of cabbage. **4** Compost is a great garden addition, as it contains nutrients that are beneficial for plants. **5** Organic mulch enriches your soil.

Nurturing Nature

After the hard work of planting your vegetable garden, it's important to provide the right maintenance to ensure that your veggies thrive. With a little care and attention, you're just around the corner from a harvest of homegrown vegetables.

Supportive Structures: As some plants mature, they require support structures to keep them happy and healthy. Got vining plants like beans, peas, and cucumbers? Stakes and trellises help them climb and keep them off the ground, reducing the risk of rot and pest damage. Squash requires a mat to stay clean and clear of potential bugs, while lettuce plants appreciate a layer of organic mulch such as straw or compost to keep their shallow root systems cool and moist. For tomatoes, add sturdy wire cages to the plants early in the growing season to provide support and prevent sprawling. Every plant needs something different—make sure to check the care instructions for yours before you add supports.

Critter Control: Pests can turn a healthy garden into a fast-food restaurant overnight. Regularly inspect your plants for signs of pests such as chewed leaves, holes, or discoloration, and use natural pest control methods like companion planting, natural odors from spices or plants like marigolds, an introduction of beneficial insects, or organic pest repellents. Remove any damaged or diseased plants promptly to prevent the spread of diseases or pests.

Feeding With Fertilizer: To provide your vegetables with essential nutrients, use organic fertilizers like compost or manure to enrich the soil. Nutrients in natural fertilizers are released slowly and steadily, providing a consistent supply to plants. Apply fertilizer according to the needs of each vegetable variety—some require more frequent feeding than others.

Mulching: Adding a layer of straw, hay, shredded leaves, grass clippings, wood chips, or compost to your garden can help conserve moisture, stop weeds from spreading, regulate soil temperature, and improve soil fertility. Simply spread a layer around your vegetable plants, ensuring even coverage on the soil surface. Aim for a thickness of about two to four inches (five to 10 cm) and leave a small gap around the plant stems to prevent moisture buildup, which can quickly lead to rot.

Weeding: As a preventative measure, consider using landscape fabric (also known as weed fabric or weed barrier cloth), which is designed to suppress weed growth by blocking sunlight from germinating weed seeds while still allowing water and air to pass through. Lay the landscape fabric over prepared soil before planting your vegetables, then cut holes or slits in the fabric where you want to place your plants.

Looking Ahead

Vegetable gardening is a continuous learning process. Don't be afraid to try new things and experiment in your garden!

Crop Rotation: This is the practice of changing the location of crops within your garden each season, which helps prevent the buildup of pests and diseases that can affect specific plant families. Aim for a three- or four-year rotation cycle where each group is planted in a different area each year.

Seed Saving: Take your gardening skills to the next level by learning how to save seeds from your favorite vegetable varieties. This practice not only saves money, but also helps preserve heirloom and rare plant varieties.

Container Planting: Incorporating container plants is a great way to maximize space in your garden, add variety, and try out new vegetables—even those that may not be suitable for your yard's soil. It's also a great option for those living in places without a yard or a way to plant vegetables in the ground. Think of it as a low-risk way to go bold with different types of vegetables, heirloom varieties, or even unique cultivars that you may not find in your local nurseries.

Another perk of container planting is that you can control the height—no more backaches!

Plant a Mushroom Garden

Not only are mushrooms delicious and nutritious, but they also provide a rewarding gardening experience. Get started today and you'll be harvesting your own fungi within weeks.

1. Every mushroom variety has a unique flavor profile and growing requirements, so do your research to find ones that suit your taste and climate.

2. Prepare their mediums—the materials that will provide your mushrooms with nutrients and support. Most prefer a mix of organic materials like straw, wood chips, or sawdust. You can buy them in pre-made kits or create your own.

3. Most mushrooms prefer indirect sunlight or shade. Find a spot in your garden that gets filtered light or is shaded for a significant part of the day, like under a tree.

4. Plant your mushroom spawn (the mycelium or root structure) according to the instructions for your variety.

5. Maintain moisture by misting the growing medium regularly, but avoid overwatering.

6. After a few weeks, harvest your mushrooms by twisting and pulling gently to avoid damaging the mycelium.

Shiitake

Wild honey fungus

DIGGING DEEPER:

Spacing and Arrangement

Design your garden to help your plants thrive from the inside out.

There's a lot to consider when it comes to planning out how your garden's plants will be arranged; but it's worth it for the picture-perfect results.

When you first plant, your garden may look extra spacious—but the mature versions of your plants should fill in the gaps.

When it comes to creating a beautiful and thriving garden, proper plant spacing is key. Your exact approach will depend on factors such as the types of plants you want to grow, available space, and personal preferences—but with a little planning, you can transform your outdoor space into an enchanting oasis.

Consider Mature Size

Overcrowding your plants can lead to competition for resources as well as increased humidity levels that can lead to fungal infections. To avoid this, research the mature size of each plant species you intend to grow so you can plan ahead and prevent issues down the line. As a general rule, small plants should be spaced six to 12 inches apart, medium-sized plants 12 to 24 inches apart, and large plants 24 to 36 inches apart. Avoid planting taller or bushier plants in a way that will shade smaller or sun-loving plants.

Think Like an Artist

Your garden is your canvas; consider the colors, textures, heights, and widths of your plants when planning their placement. Group plants with contrasting hues together to create eye-catching combinations, or stick to one color but mix different foliage textures to add variety. Use layers to add dimension and allow each plant to be seen and appreciated—place taller plants towards the back or center of your garden beds, gradually transitioning to shorter plants towards the front.

Stay in Line

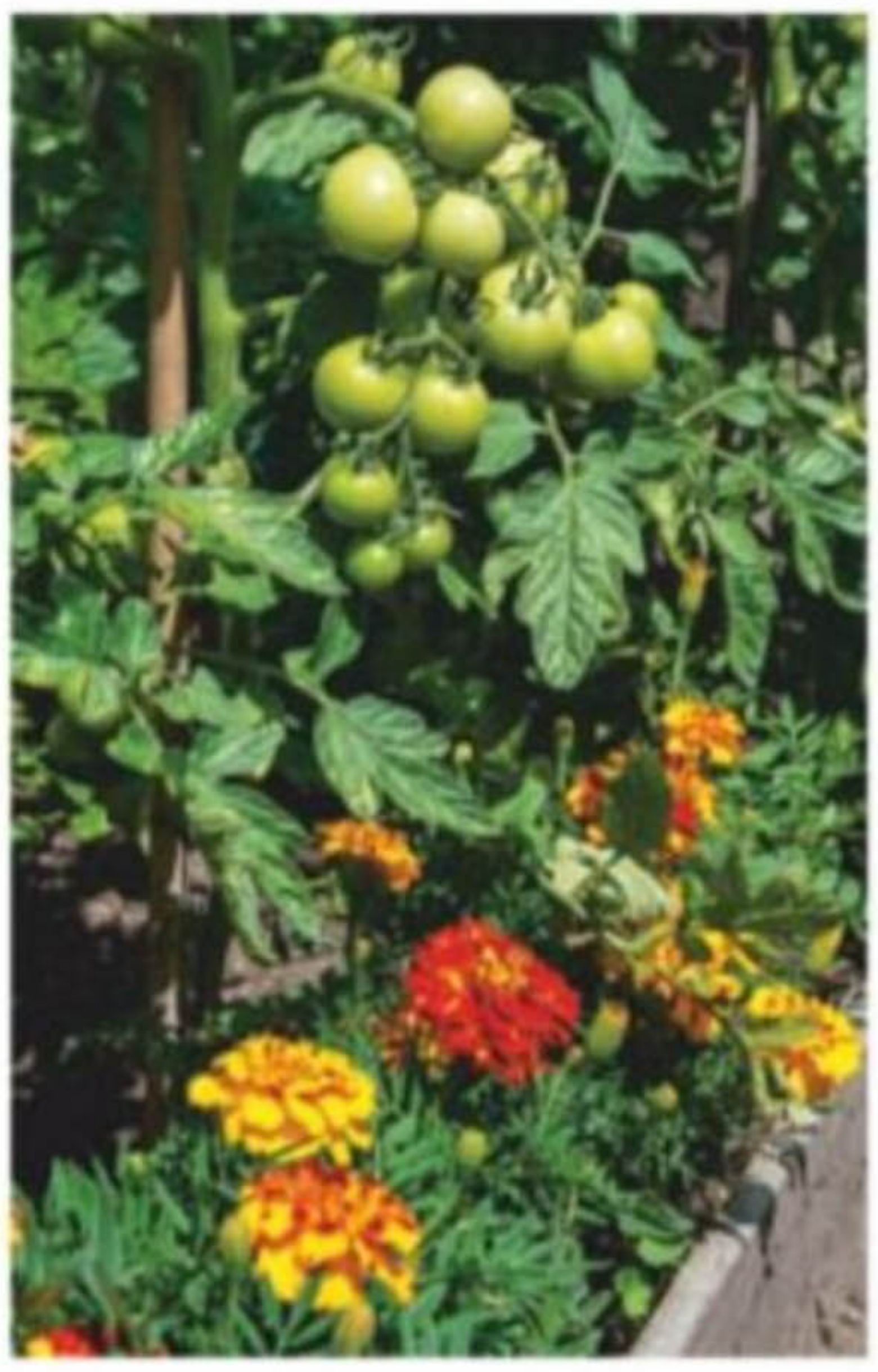
Short on space? Row planting and staggered row planting are two common methods used to organize and space plants in a garden. These methods allow you to maximize the planting space while still allowing for an aesthetically pleasing view. In row planting, plants are arranged in straight rows with equal spacing between them. Staggered or offset rows involve planting each row slightly off-center from the row before it to maximize space and allow for better airflow and sunlight penetration between plants.

Find Your Footing

For a layout that makes it easier to plan and maintain your garden, consider square-foot gardening, which is a method that divides the garden into small square sections (typically 1 foot by 1 foot). Each square is then planted with a specific crop or a combination of crops based on their spacing requirements. This pattern maximizes space utilization and makes it easier to plan and maintain the garden. The spacing within each square foot will depend on the mature size of the plants. For example, in a vegetable garden, larger plants like broccoli or cabbage may require one plant per square foot while smaller plants like herbs or carrots can be planted in multiples within a single square foot.

Group Friends Together

Some plants benefit each other when grown together. For example, planting marigolds next to tomatoes can help repel pests, while growing beans near corn can provide natural supports for the beans to climb. This technique, called companion planting, is all about the plants' needs. Note that you still need to give enough space between each plant to allow for their mature size and growth habit.



Planting marigolds near tomatoes can offer some protection against pests such as whiteflies.

GENERAL SPACING RULE	6"-12"	12"-24"	24"-36"
	Small plants	Medium plants	Large plants

DIGGING DEEPER:

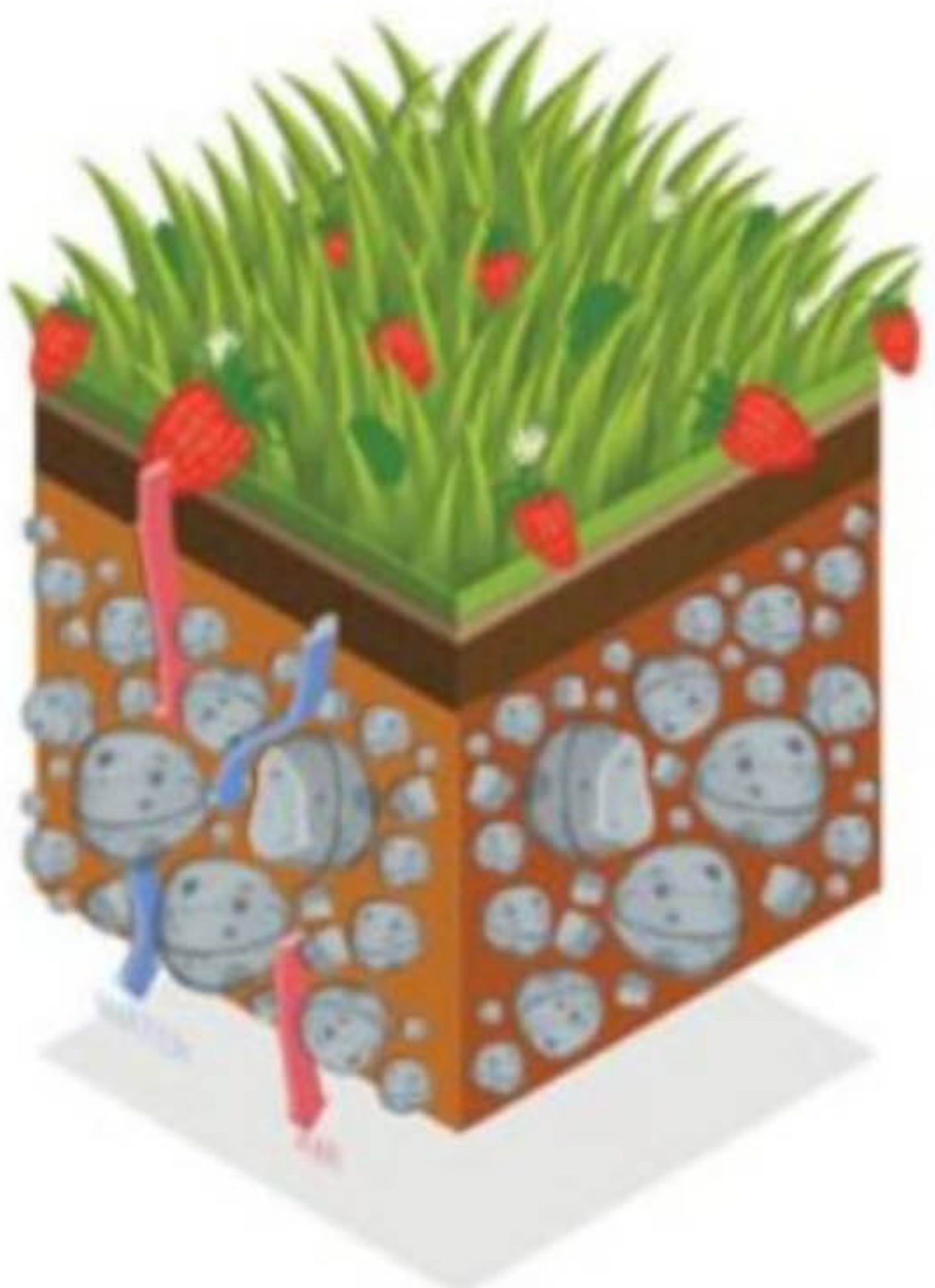
Drainage and Sunlight

How to ensure your plants flourish by getting the right amount of these essential garden elements.

Tulip colors are said to have various meanings; pink tulips signify affection and love.

Plants' roots often grow deeper than you think—a whole system is right below our feet!

Lily of the valley flowers do their best in partial shade, and thrive in hardiness zones 3-9.



Normal soil should have enough room for both water and air to circulate through it.

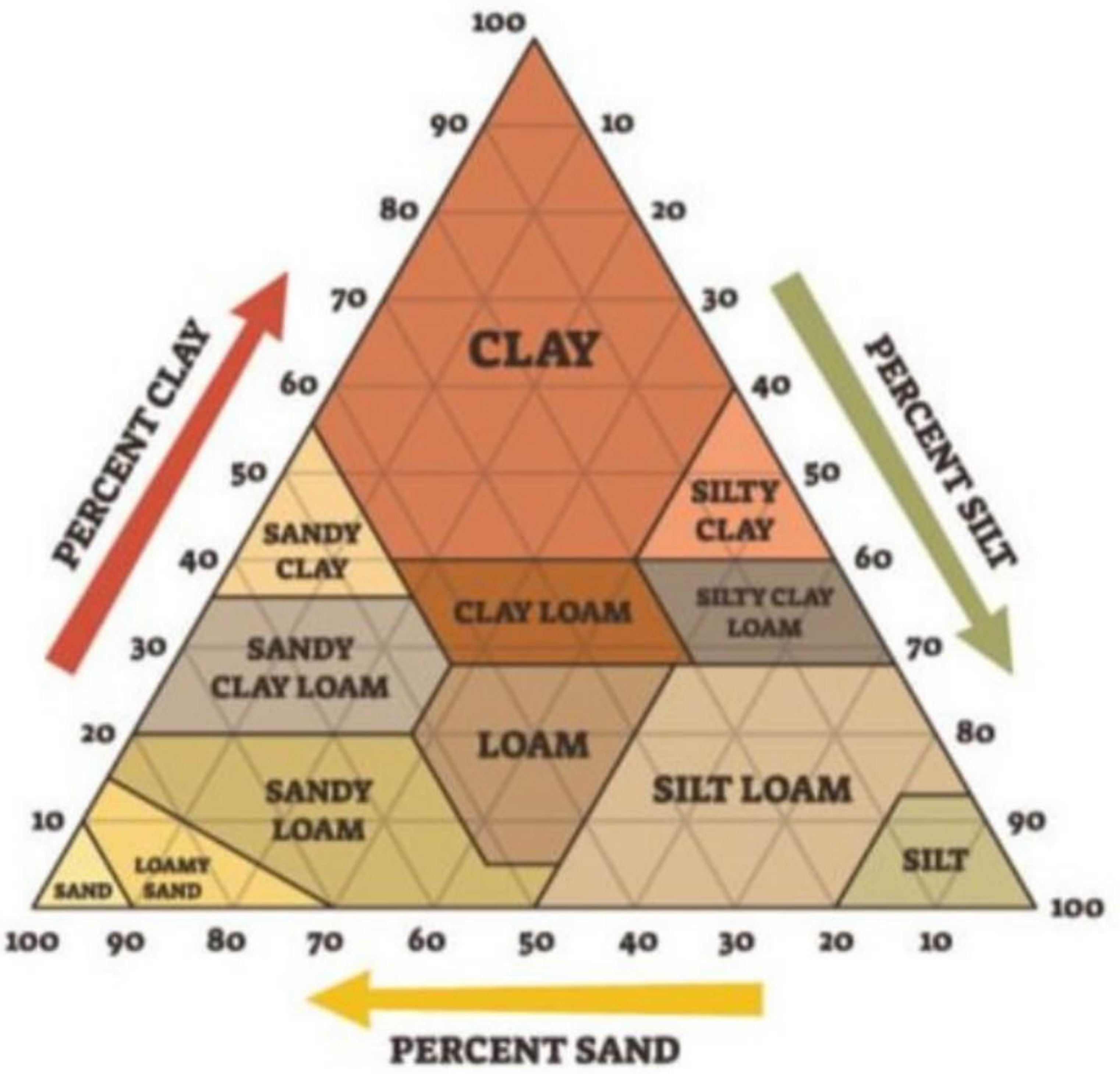
Among the myriad of factors that influence plant growth, two stand out as paramount: sunlight and water drainage. Only by learning how to optimize both of them can you unlock the full potential of your home garden.

Play Detective

Spend an afternoon taking note of areas that receive varying sunlight throughout the day, then use that to create a personalized garden "sun map" before you start planting. In general, it is recommended to prioritize sunlight when planning a garden layout since it directly impacts plant growth and productivity. But even the benefits of great sun can be thwarted if too much water is washing away nutrients and causing root rot. Take some time to study your garden's water patterns after rainfall or watering sessions to identify spots that might pool water around plant roots. Look for standing water, soggy soil, or signs of erosion—those are signs of specific areas that need attention. This invaluable intel can guide planting decisions for seasons to come.

Get Specific with Sun

Choosing the perfect spot in your garden requires a bit more planning than selecting a sunny corner. Keep an eye on how the sunlight in your yard shifts throughout the day; an area receiving morning sunshine will yield better results than one exposed to scorching afternoon rays. Also, consider your plant placement in relation to each other. For example, plant taller, sun-loving plants on the north side of your garden where they won't block sunlight from reaching shorter plants positioned toward the south side. A stair-step approach works wonders if you're limited by a smaller outdoor space, and allows you to play with light and shadows for an aesthetically appealing garden. Lastly, don't forget that a variety of plants thrive best in part shade or dappled light—so make use of shaded patches, too.



Soil Texture The texture of your soil depends on how much sand, silt, and clay is present in it. Various soil textures are ideal for different types of plants; figure out your soil type (pick up soil tests at your local gardening store) so you can choose plants that will thrive in your specific environment.

Start From the Ground Up

When it comes to drainage, start with the fundamentals: soil composition and structure. Soil composition is determined by the ratio of sand, silt, clay, and organic matter in the soil; soil structure refers to how individual soil particles aggregate or clump together to form larger units. The interaction between the two is essential for plant growth. While a balanced soil composition with adequate organic matter provides nutrients and promotes microbial activity, a well-structured soil allows roots to access these nutrients, facilitates water movement, and promotes aeration. For a DIY test, dig a hole one foot deep by one foot wide and fill it with water. Ideally, it should drain completely in 10-30 minutes. If it drains faster, the soil is likely sandy—plants may not have enough time to absorb the water. If it takes longer, your soil is probably more clay-like, which reduces how much oxygen your plants are taking in.

DIGGING DEEPER:

Plant Partner Interactions

Take your garden to the next level with a little help from plants that get along.

Did you know that just like people, plants have friends...and enemies, too? With a little knowledge about these fascinating relationships, you can create a backyard oasis that brings out the best in your greenery.

Play Matchmaker

Help your plants flourish side by side with companion planting—where certain plants are strategically grown together to benefit each other. For example, a plant that releases pest-repelling chemicals could protect a neighboring plant of a different species. As another example, a dense plant could be planted next to a delicate friend to act as protection from the wind.

Not all plants play well together, though—some plant pairings actually hinder garden growth as they compete for light, water, nutrients, and space. Other factors such as spacing, maintenance, and pest management can mitigate incompatibility, but beginners should proceed with caution.

Beneficial Pairings

Corn, Beans, and Squash: The classic "Three Sisters" arrangement, these work together in perfect harmony. Corn provides sturdy stalks for the beans to climb, while beans replace vital nitrogen in the soil for both corn and squash to consume. Squash leaves also act as natural mulch that smother weeds and keep moisture in check.

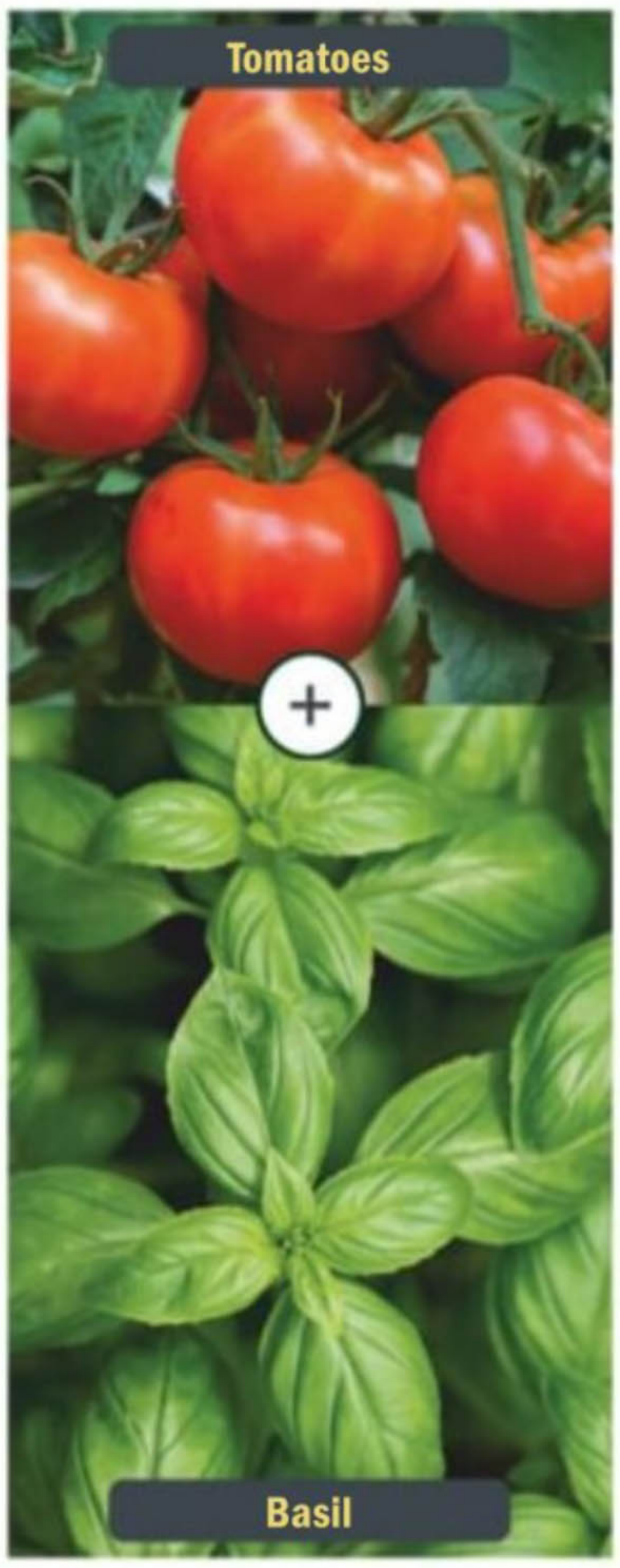
Spider Flower and Lettuce: The spider flower (a.k.a. cleome) is a great neighbor, giving lettuce the light shade it grows best in.

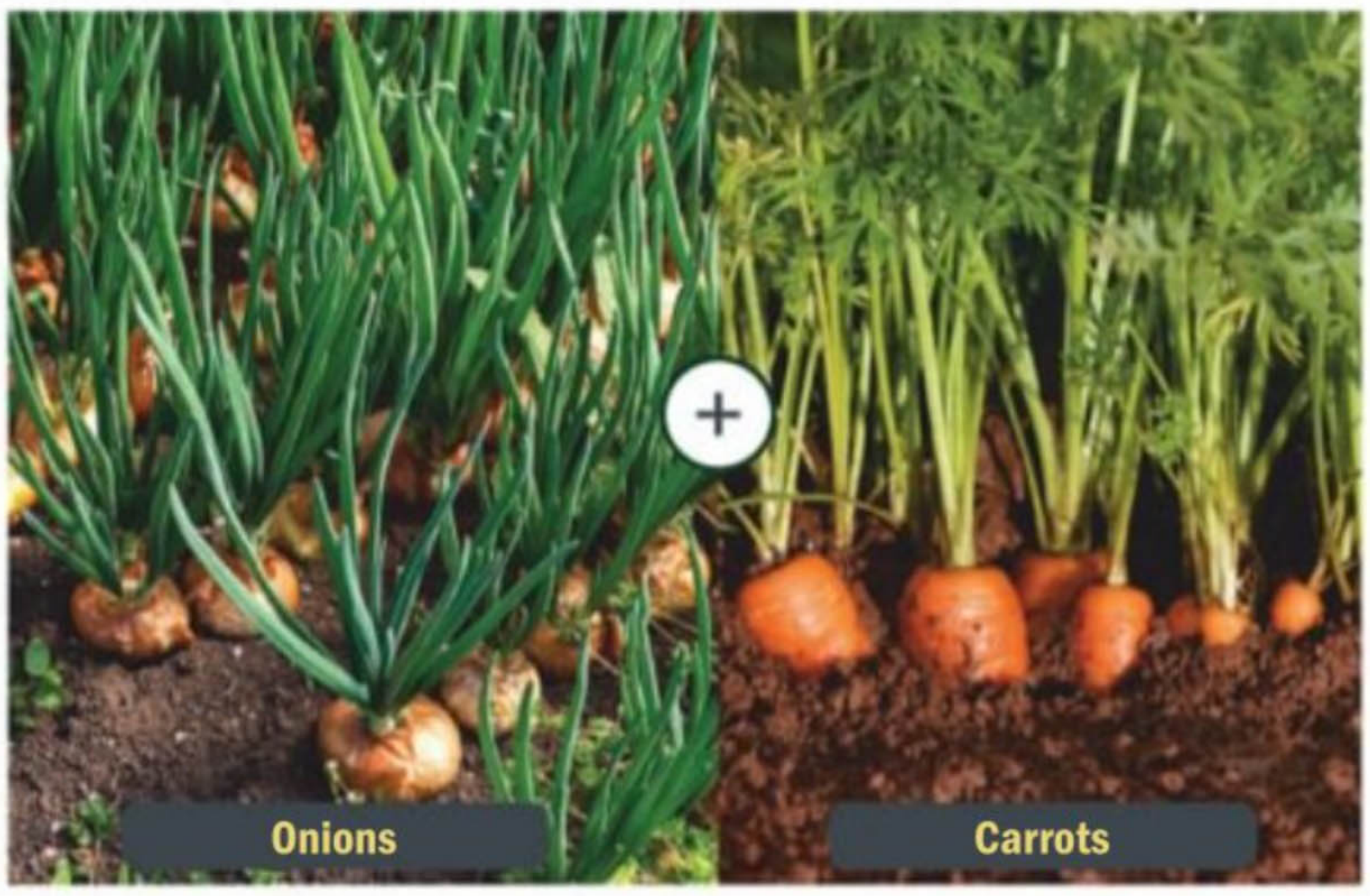
Tomatoes and Basil: These two are a delectable duo in the kitchen and have a symbiotic relationship in the garden. Basil repels pests that are attracted to tomatoes, while tomato plants provide shade and extra humidity to help basil flourish.

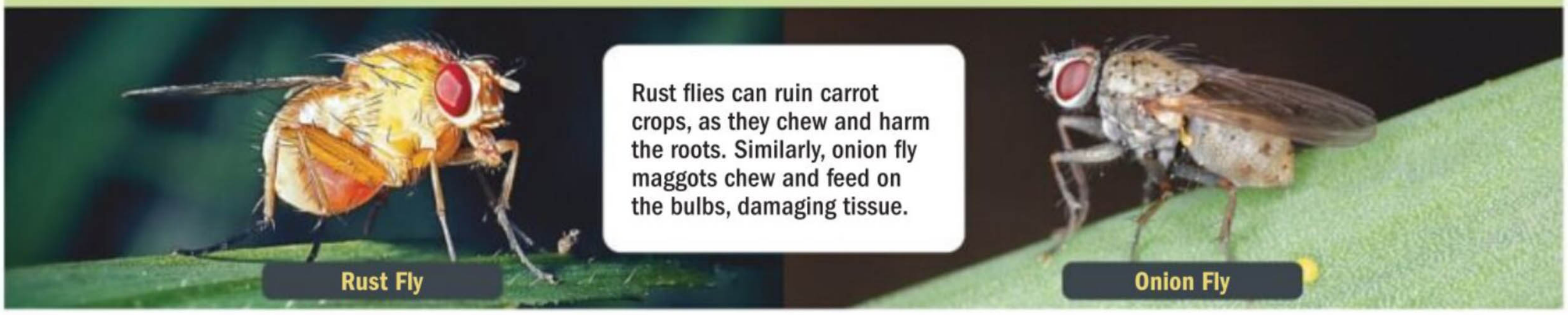
Carrots and Onions: Planting these root vegetables together confuses both carrot rust flies and onion maggots, preventing damage to your precious produce.

Beans
+
Squash
+

Spider Flower
+
Lettuce







Rust flies can ruin carrot crops, as they chew and harm the roots. Similarly, onion fly maggots chew and feed on the bulbs, damaging tissue.

Difficult Pairings

Potatoes and Tomatoes: They might be delicious together on your plate, but in the garden, they attract similar pests which can quickly lead to devastation.

Cabbage and Strawberries: These plants compete with each other for nutrients and moisture in the soil, leading to less-than-ideal growth for both of them.

Aromatic Herbs and Some Veggies: Herbs like dill can produce compounds that actually stunt the growth of vegetables like carrots and cucumbers.

Lettuce and Zucchini: Lettuce likes a little shade, but zucchini's rapid growth and wide leaves will quickly overshadow it.

Bring the Blooms

Everyone loves getting flowers…including plants! Incorporating flowers can elevate your garden to new heights of beauty while bolstering plant-plant interactions. Fragrant marigolds deter pests from attacking their fellow friends; petunias showcase their elegance while fending off pesky herbivores; humble nasturtiums, cherished for their fiery blossoms, serve not only as striking natural decor but also lure aphids away from more delicate plant neighbors. Incorporating beneficial flowers like these can help you attract pollinators, repel pests, and keep your garden strong.

Nasturtium flowers are edible, too; you can use them to add a punch of color and style to your dishes with homegrown veggies.

Establishing an easy watering system and schedule is essential to keep your garden thriving.

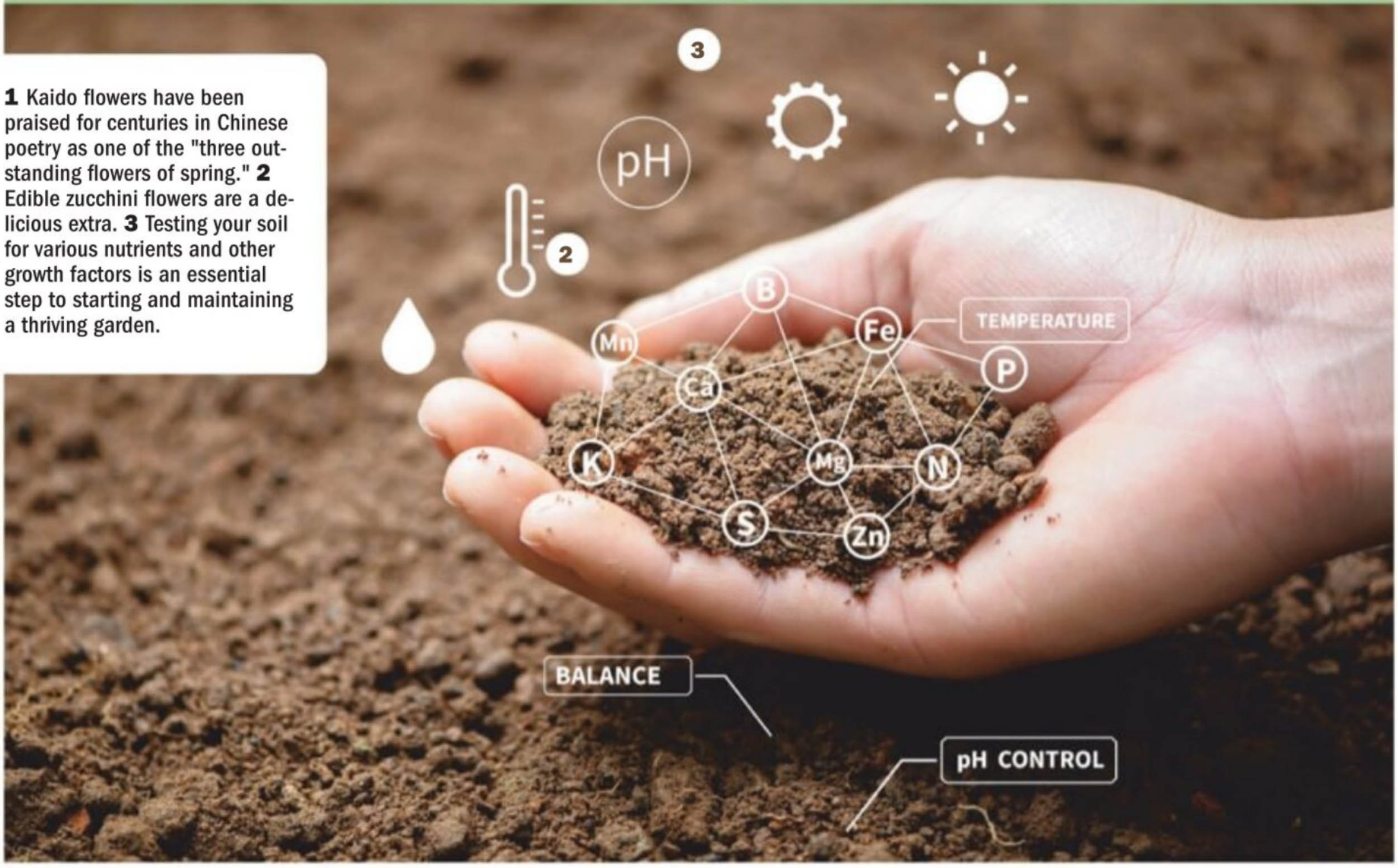
Plant Parenting 101

Feeding, watering, and caring for your plants to help them reach their fullest potential

The fun doesn't stop once you've put your plants in the ground! The real secret behind keeping plants thriving and flourishing isn't luck or a particularly green thumb—it's all about understanding the art of ongoing plant care. From the right nutrients to proper watering techniques, there's plenty you can do to keep your plants healthy, encourage new growth, shape their form, and keep pests at bay. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting your journey into plant parenthood, there's nothing like seeing your efforts rewarded through vibrant foliage and blossoms.

Feeding Frenzy

Unleash the hidden potential of your garden by harnessing the power of plant fertilizers.


3
pH
2
B
Mn
Fe
TEMPERATURE
Ca
P
K
Mg
N
S
Zn
BALANCE
pH CONTROL

1 Kaido flowers have been praised for centuries in Chinese poetry as one of the "three outstanding flowers of spring." **2** Edible zucchini flowers are a delicious extra. **3** Testing your soil for various nutrients and other growth factors is an essential step to starting and maintaining a thriving garden.

Granular fertilizers are great in cold weather, whereas liquid variants work well year-round.

Plants, much like us, require proper nutrition to flourish. By understanding the basics of plant nutrition and feeding your plants with the right fertilizers, you can transform your garden into a botanical haven.

A Balanced Diet

To better understand plant nutrition, it's essential to comprehend its primary components: macronutrients, secondary nutrients, and micronutrients. These fundamental building blocks pave the way for optimal growth, reproduction, and overall health.

Macronutrients are nutrients that plants require in big quantities, such as nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). These elements are vital for general growth, root development, and flowering or fruiting processes. Often represented as N-P-K ratios on fertilizer packaging, they form the essence of plant fertility.

Secondary nutrients refer to the essential elements that plants require in moderate quantities. These nutrients include calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and sulfur (S).

Micronutrients include boron (B), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), molybdenum (Mo), zinc (Zn), and others. Although needed by plants in much smaller amounts, these elements still play crucial roles in different biochemical processes.

On the Menu

Macro, secondary, and micronutrients are typically absorbed from the soil through their roots. However, due to soil depletion, urbanization, and other factors, it's sometimes necessary to supplement with additional plant food or fertilizer. Like the diverse world they cater to, fertilizers come in a variety of forms, each suited for different purposes.

Granular Fertilizers: Granular fertilizers are sprinkled onto soil surfaces and watered in, releasing nutrients into the ground for plant root absorption. This type allows for slow, gradual nourishment over time. They come in both organic and synthetic options.

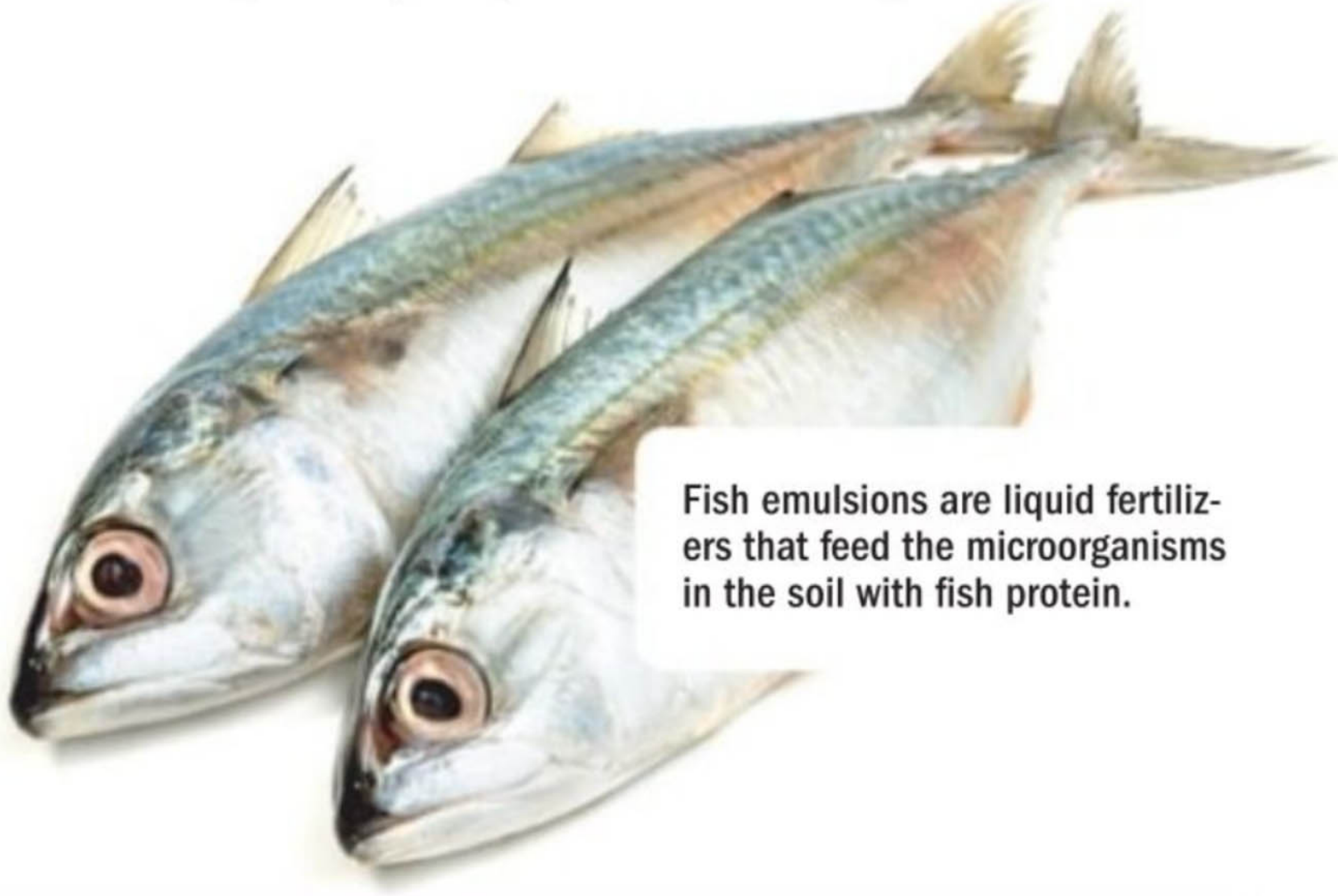
Liquid Fertilizers: Fast-acting and highly soluble in water, these fertilizers give your plants an immediate nutrient boost. They're ideal for container gardens or when your greenery needs a quick pick-me-up.

Specialty Fertilizers: These can come in granular or liquid form, but they're tailor-made for specific plants or needs. These fertilizers can target everything from the bloom-boosting requirements of roses or nutrient profiles designed for citrus trees.

Organic vs. Synthetic

Both organic and synthetic fertilizers provide essential nutrients, but organic fertilizer is derived from natural sources that can be animal-based (think cow manure, fish emulsion, blood meal, and bone meal) or plant-based (compost, seaweed extract, alfalfa meal, and cottonseed meal). Synthetic fertilizers, meanwhile, are instead manufactured via chemical processes.

Organic fertilizers are more environmentally friendly, naturally improving and maintaining long-term soil health. Synthetic fertilizers don't have those benefits—rather, they usually provide a quick release of nutrients, making them best suited for addressing immediate nutrient deficiencies or promoting rapid growth. Ultimately, the best fertilizer for you depends on the needs of your plants and soil. Experiment with various types and pay close attention to your plants' responses, adjusting as necessary.



Fish emulsions are liquid fertilizers that feed the microorganisms in the soil with fish protein.

Eight Leftovers to Feed to Your Plants

Transform your table scraps into plant superfoods.

Coffee grounds, once used for your morning brew, don't need to be trashed—feed them to your plants!

Did you know your kitchen is a treasure trove of readily available plant nutrients? Before tossing leftovers into the trash or pouring the last of your drink down the drain, consider giving them a second life as food for your plants.

Coffee Grounds: Used coffee grounds are rich in nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus, providing an excellent slow-release organic fertilizer for acid-loving plants like tomatoes, blueberries, and roses.

☑ **Recipe:** Sprinkle the grounds around the plant base or mix them into the soil.

Collect veggie scraps for a DIY compost solution that feeds your plants the nutrition they crave.

Banana Peels: Banana peels, like the fruit, are a great source of potassium, which promotes more flowering and fruiting in plants.

☑ **Recipe:** Chop up banana peels and bury them near the base of plants like tomatoes, peppers, and roses.

Vegetable Scraps: Many vegetable scraps can be repurposed as plant food, including carrot tops, celery leaves, and onion skins.

☑ **Recipe:** Boil your veggie scraps into a nutrient-rich broth, then dilute it (one part broth with three parts water) to use as a fertilizer spray.

Eggshells: Eggshells are rich in calcium, which helps prevent blossom end rot in tomatoes and other calcium-loving plants.

☑ **Recipe:** Crushed eggshells can be sprinkled around the base of plants or added to compost to enrich the soil.

Tea: Used tea leaves contain valuable nutrients like nitrogen and trace minerals; chamomile, nettle, and other herbal teas can improve plant health.

☑ **Recipe:** Sprinkle cooled leaves around the base of acid-loving plants, and use the liquid as a fertilizer spray directly on plant leaves.

Cooking Water: Pasta and rice water contain starches that can benefit plants when used as a natural fertilizer.

☑ **Recipe:** Allow the water to cool, then just use it to water your garden or potted plants.

Wine: The alcohol in wine can help control certain fungal diseases in plants, acting as a natural fungicide.

☑ **Recipe:** Dilute wine with water (one part wine to 10 parts water) and use it as a spray on plants affected by fungal diseases.

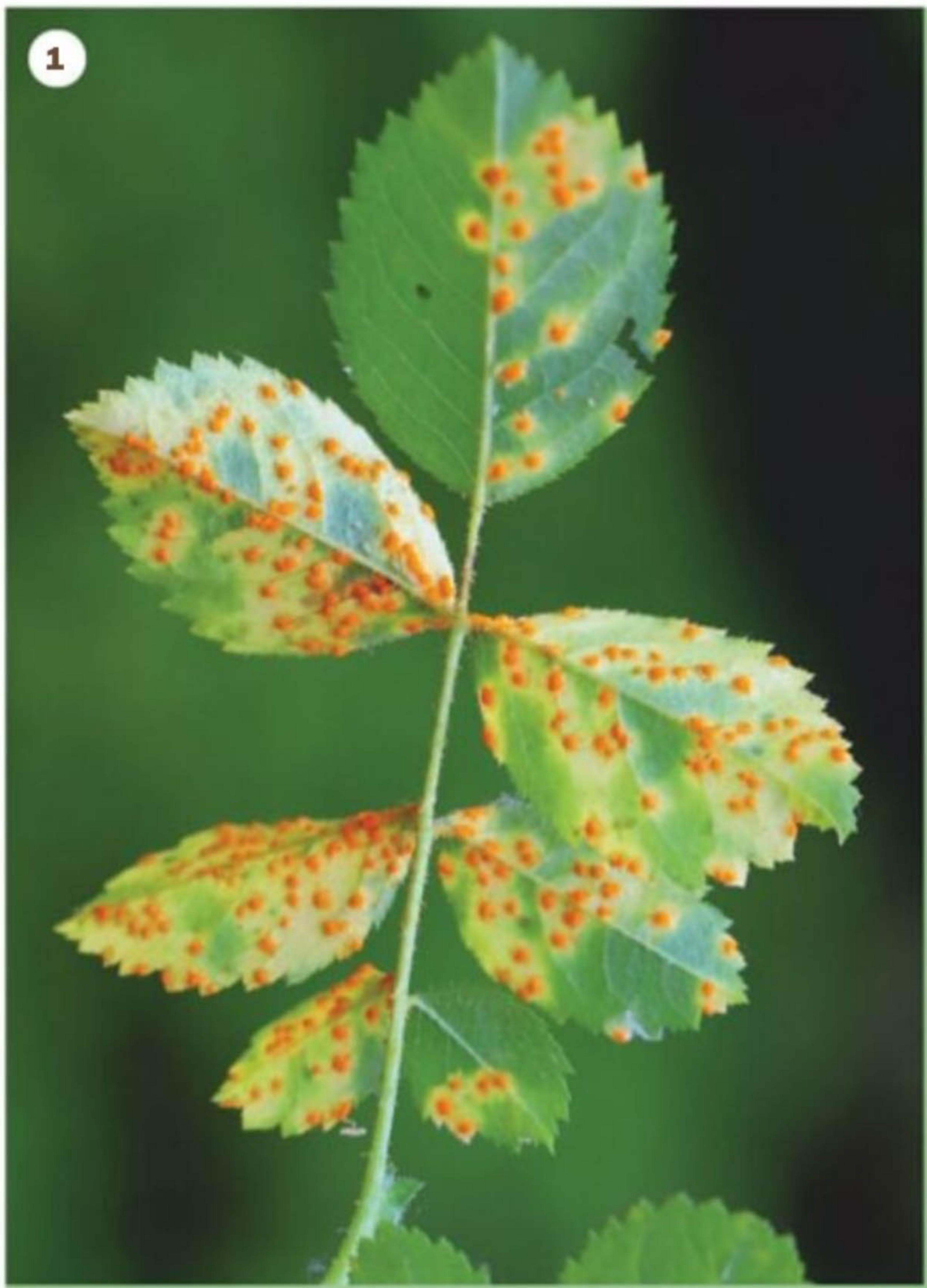
Seaweed: Rich in trace minerals and growth hormones, seaweed can enhance plant growth and overall health.

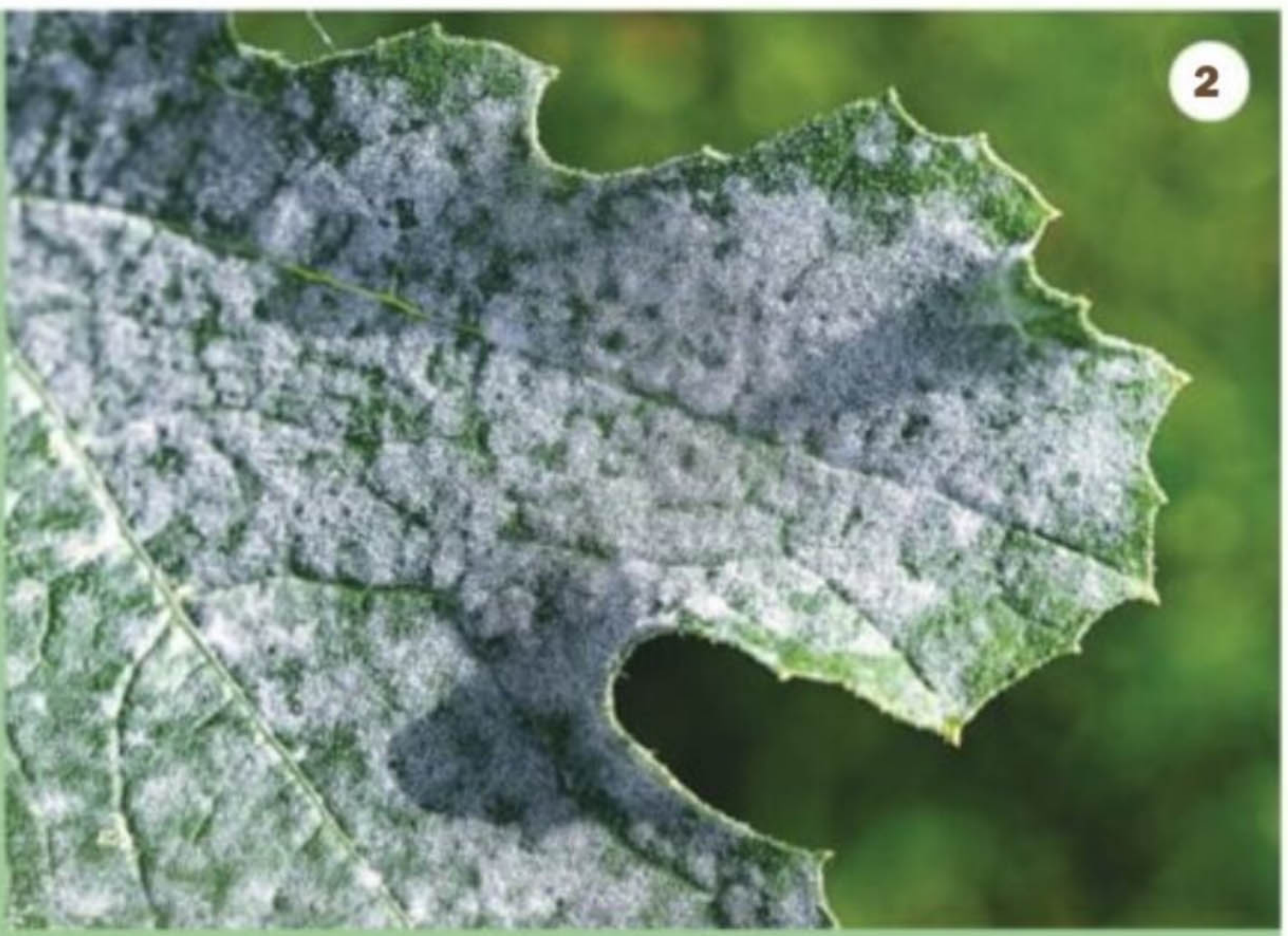
☑ **Recipe:** Be sure to rinse off any excess salt, then use seaweed as mulch or add it to compost.

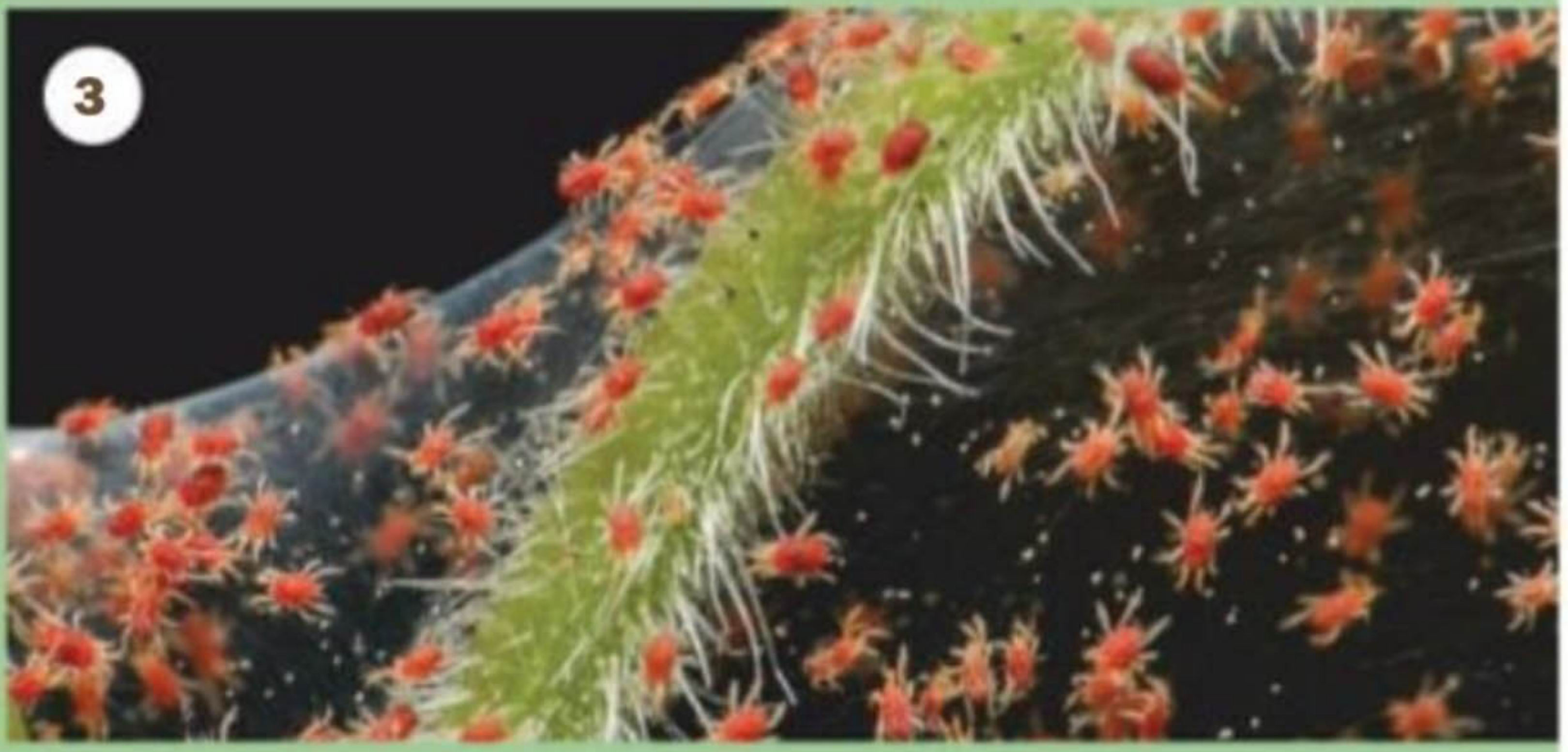
Don't want to fuss with specific leftovers? Consider getting a compost bin and gathering organic materials like leftover fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and tea leaves, eggshells, leaves and grass clippings, and small amounts of paper (like shredded cardboard). Over time, these materials will break down into compost, which can be mixed in with soil to add essential nutrients and improve moisture retention.

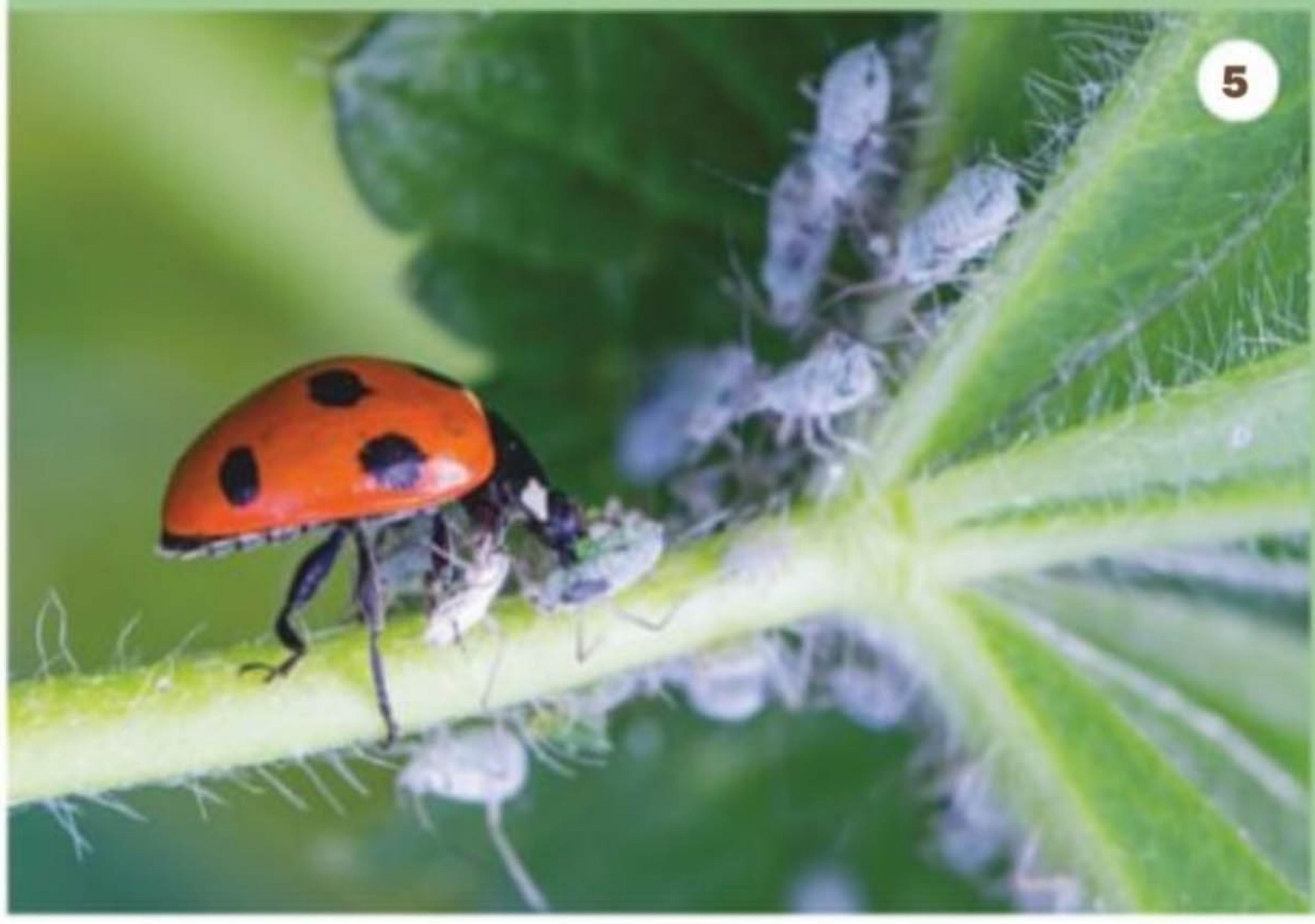
Organic Insecticides and Fungicides

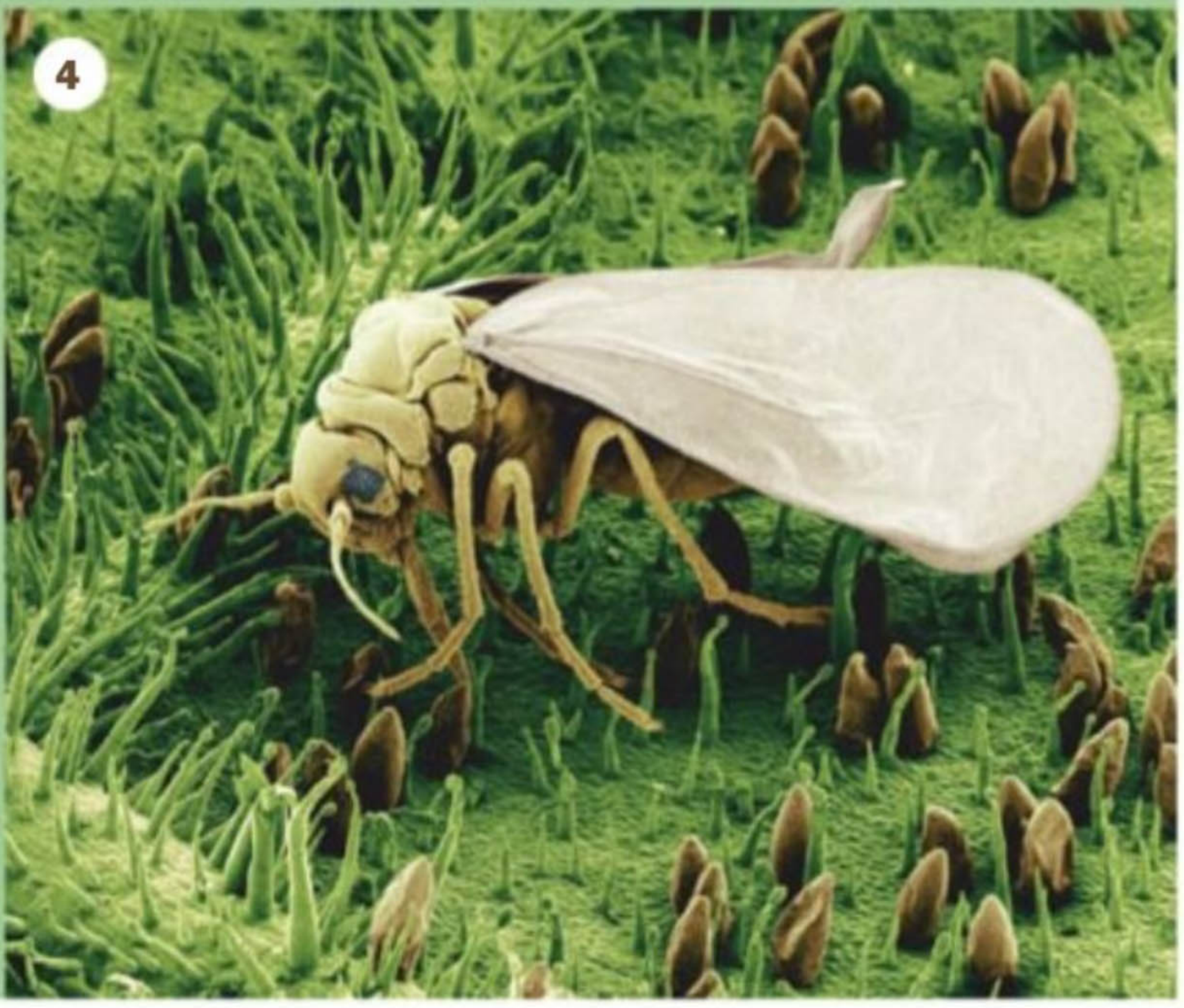
Safeguard your plants from pests and diseases.











1 Rose rust found on a rose bush **2** White, powdery mildew on the leaves of a zucchini plant **3** An infestation of red spider mites on a vegetable plant **4** A whitefly, which can damage some vegetable crops like eggplant and tomato plants **5** A ladybug eating aphids, which can be damaging to crops

Some insecticides and fungicides can be added to spray bottles to easily coat your plants.

Often, the first time we reach for fungicides and insecticides for our gardens is when we're dealing with pests and diseases. But they can actually be applied preventatively to protect plants from potential infestations and infections. This approach is often recommended for plants that are prone to specific pests or diseases, or for plants in regions where certain plant problems are known to be prevalent. By applying insecticides before they appear, you can create a barrier of protection and reduce the risk of damage to your plants.

Whether you want to use them preventatively or to combat active issues, you have plenty of options for both—including organic ones. Let's break it down:

Fungicides

Fungi can wreak havoc on your garden by causing diseases like powdery mildew, leaf spot, and blight. Fungicides are substances that help control or prevent fungal infections. While chemical fungicides are commonly available, organic alternatives provide effective solutions without harming the environment.

Organic Options:

1. Neem Oil: Derived from the neem tree, neem oil is a natural fungicide that disrupts the growth and reproduction of fungi. It is particularly effective against powdery mildew and black spot. Apply it every seven to 14 days or as needed, especially during periods of high humidity or when fungal diseases are prevalent.

2. Copper-Based Fungicides: Copper-based products like copper sulfate or copper hydroxide create an environment that inhibits fungal growth while being safe for plants. Follow the instructions provided, and know that overuse can lead to an excess of copper in the soil which is toxic for plants.

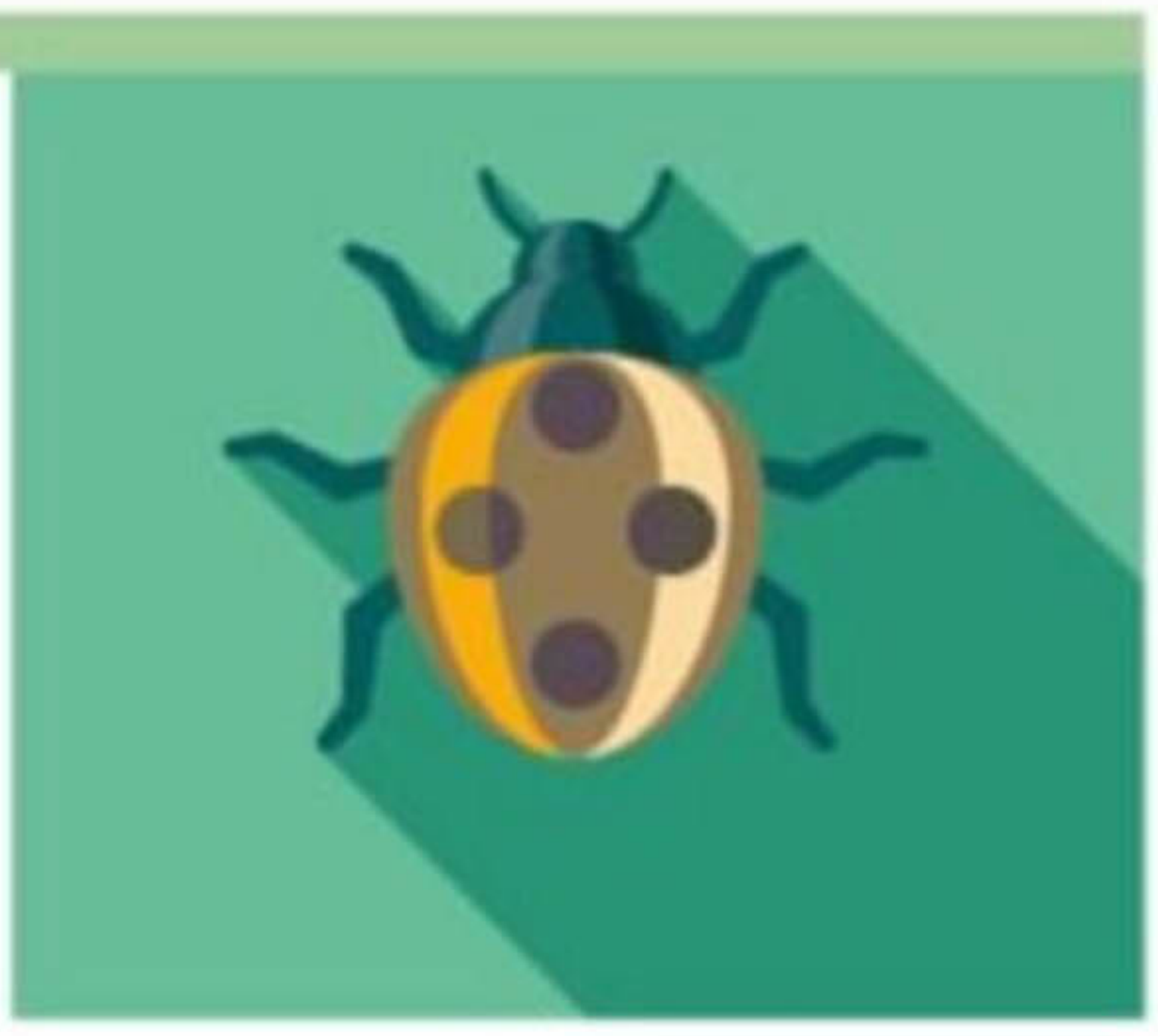
3. Baking Soda: A simple kitchen ingredient, baking soda mixed with water can be used as a spray to control fungal diseases like powdery mildew. Apply a solution of 1 tablespoon of baking soda per gallon of water every seven to 10 days (or as needed) to control powdery mildew outbreaks.

Pesticides

Pests such as aphids, caterpillars, and beetles can damage plants by feeding on leaves, stems, or fruits; pesticides are substances used to control or eliminate these pests. Organic pesticides offer effective pest management while minimizing harm to beneficial insects and the broader environment.

Organic Options:

1. Insecticidal Soap: This option targets soft-bodied insects like aphids, whiteflies, and mites. It's made from potassium salts of fatty acids and works by disrupting pests' cell membranes, leading to dehydration and death. Apply insecticidal soap every seven to 10 days or as needed, focusing on areas where pests are present or on susceptible plants.



2. Pyrethrin: Derived from the flowers of certain chrysanthemum species, pyrethrin is a natural insecticide that affects the nervous system of pests. It is effective against a wide range of insects but breaks down quickly in sunlight. Apply pyrethrin-based insecticides according to the instructions on the product label.

3. Diatomaceous Earth: Composed of fossilized remains of diatoms, diatomaceous earth acts as a physical barrier to deter pests. It damages the critters' exoskeletons, causing dehydration and death. Apply diatomaceous earth as a barrier around plants or directly on pests.

1 Neem oil **2** Blue copper sulfate **3** Pyrethrum and a goldsmith beetle **4** A Colorado beetle on a leaf sprinkled with diatomaceous earth

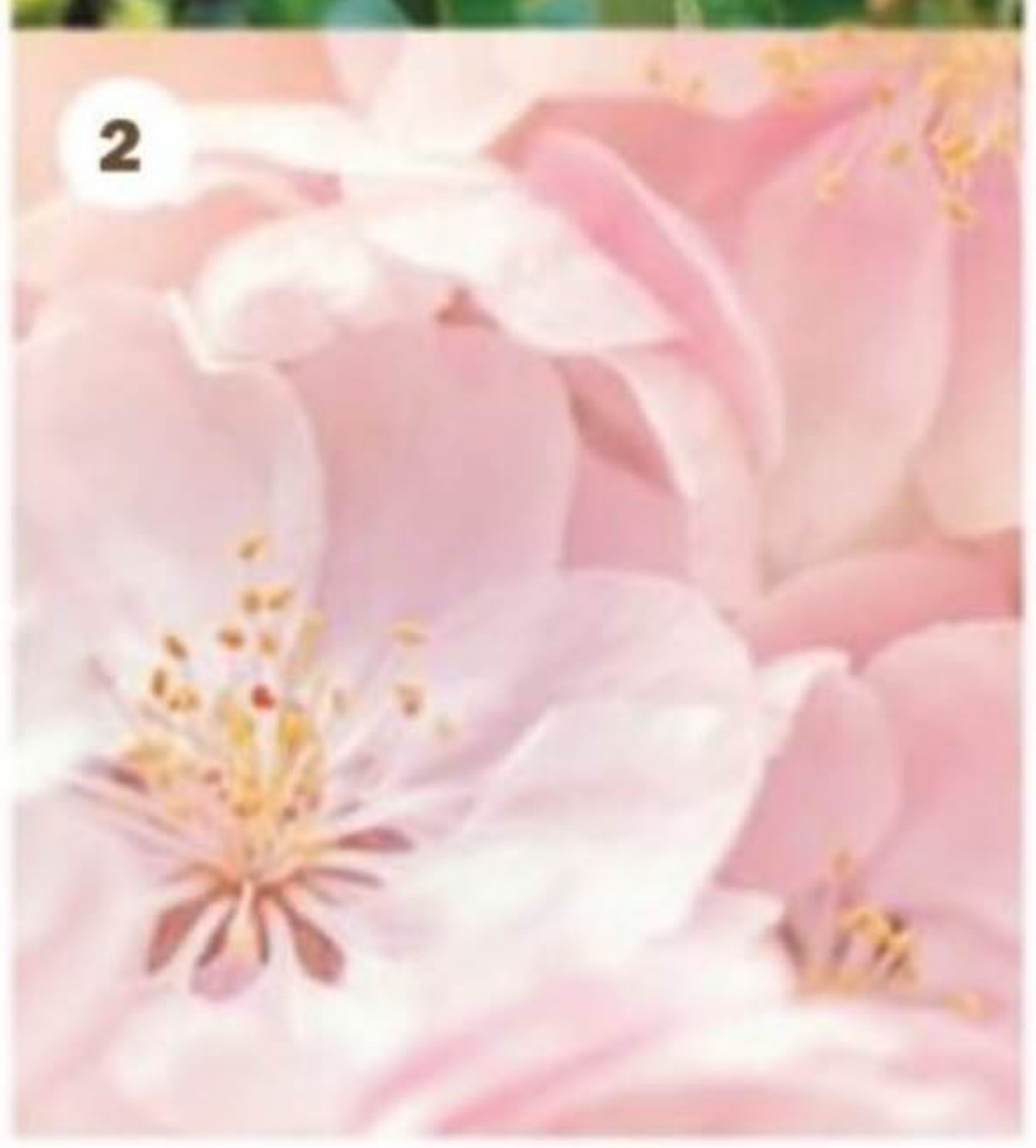
The Ultimate Trimming Guide

The positive impact of tidying up your plants

When it comes to your plants, a trim can be transformational inside and out. Though pruning might seem like a daunting task, with a little practice, it'll soon be a fun part of your gardening routine. And remember, gardening is about embracing imperfections and finding joy in the process. If you give your plants a bad haircut, they'll bounce back, so don't be afraid to experiment and learn as you go.

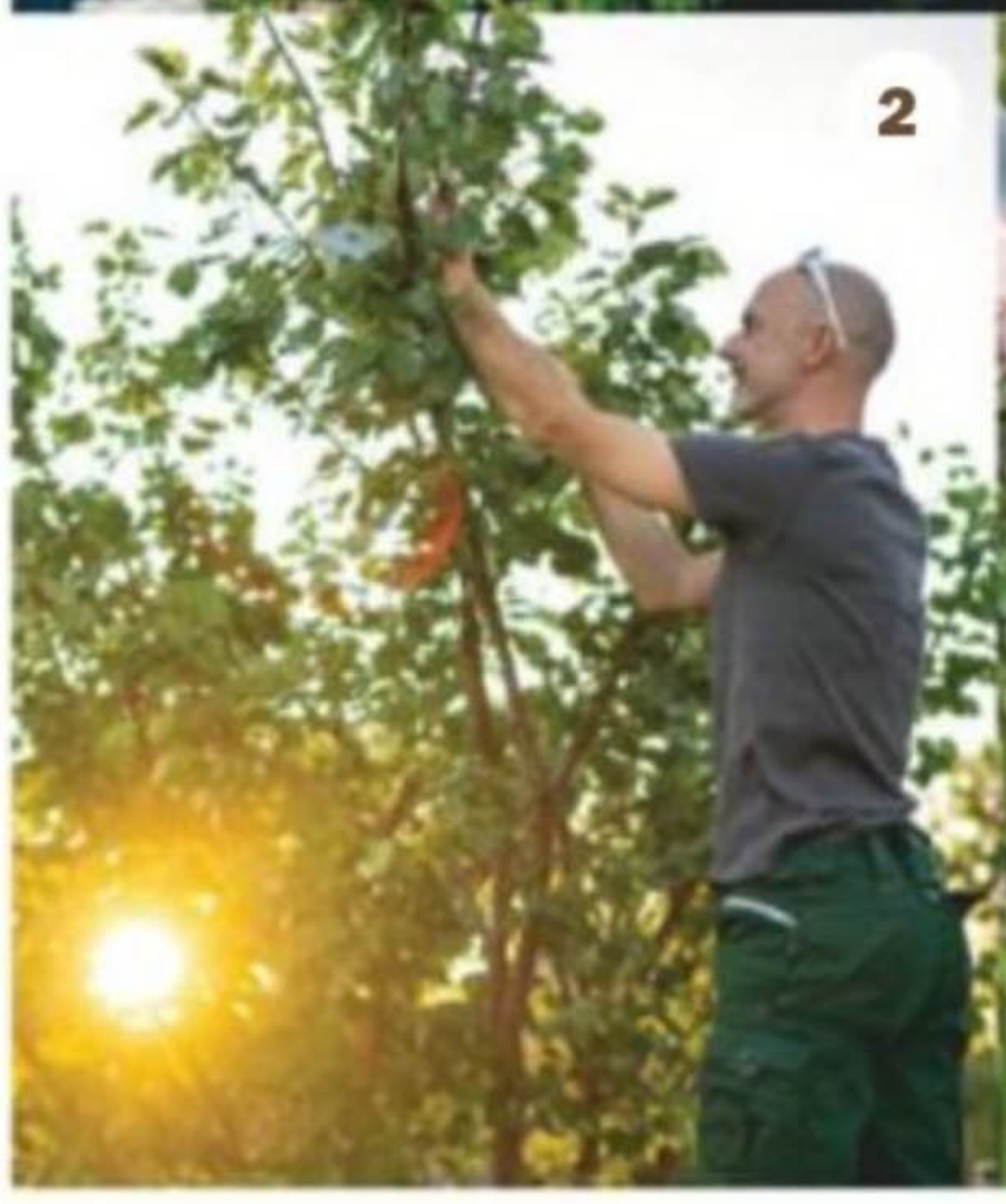
Pruning Benefits

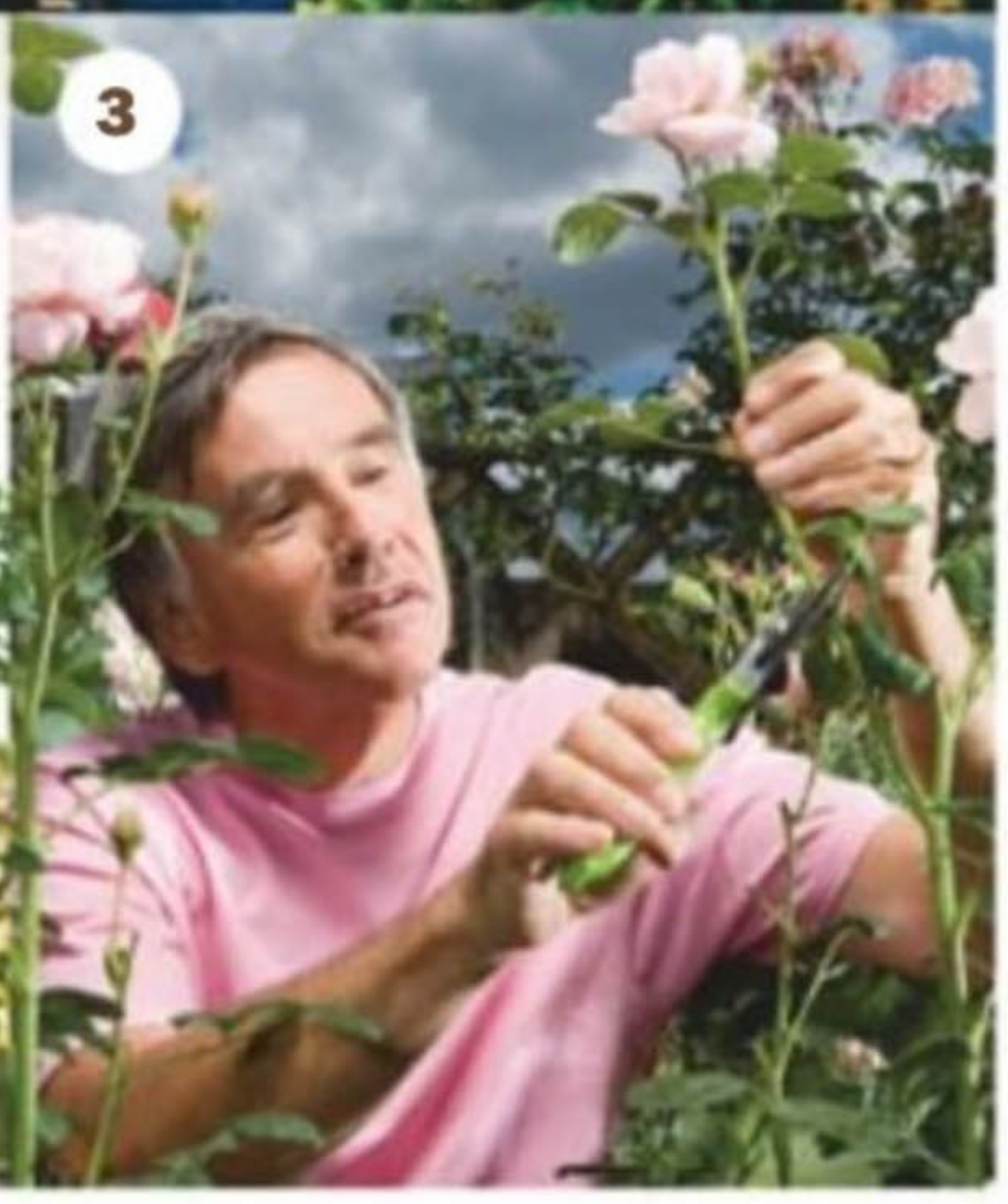
Sure, pruning your garden keeps it looking tidy, but the benefits go way past appearances. Regularly pruning plants helps stimulate new growth and encourages the development of a strong and healthy plant structure. By removing damaged branches, you allow the plant to focus its energy on producing new and healthy foliage. Pruning also lets you control the size and shape of your plants, preventing them from becoming overgrown or unruly. This is important for plants that tend to spread or become too tall, as it helps maintain a neat and well-maintained appearance in your garden. Taking a closer look at your plants also allows you to identify and remove any signs of pest infestations early on; by promptly removing affected branches or leaves, you can prevent pests from spreading and causing more extensive damage.



1 A crabapple tree sporting new fruit **2** The pink blossoms of a snowcloud crabapple tree

Pruning can also improve flowering and fruiting in many plants; by removing spent flowers or pruning back certain branches, you can redirect the plant's energy toward producing more blooms or larger fruits. Air circulation also comes into play, as dense foilage can restrict airflow within a plant, creating a favorable environment for pests and diseases. Pruning helps open up the plant canopy, allowing air to flow freely through the branches and leaves, reducing the risk of fungal infections and other issues. Similarly, by removing excessive foliage, you ensure that sunlight reaches all parts of the plant, which promotes even growth and prevents shaded areas from becoming weak or spindly.





1 You can use pruning time to mold your plants into a specific shape, such as a cone. **2** Prune apricot trees in late winter or early spring for the best results. **3** Use your pruning tools to cut flowers as well.

Techniques

Pruning, thinning, trimming… what's the difference? Think of pruning as the umbrella term for all the different ways to selectively remove certain parts of a plant. Different plants of course have different growth habits, structures, and responses to pruning, so there is a variety of techniques to choose from. Here are some of the most common:

Trimming: This specifically involves cutting back or shortening branches or foliage to control the size and shape of a plant.

Crown Pruning: This involves removing dead, diseased, or damaged branches from the crown (top) of a tree or shrub. It helps improve the plant's structure, appearance, and overall health.

Thinning: Thinning involves removing branches throughout the canopy of a tree or shrub to increase light penetration and air circulation. It helps reduce the risk of disease and promotes healthy growth.

Heading Back: Heading back is the practice of cutting back the tips of branches to encourage branching and denser growth. It is often used to rejuvenate overgrown plants or to shape hedges.

Pollarding: Pollarding is a severe form of pruning that involves cutting back all branches to the main trunk or framework branches. It is typically done on certain tree species to control their size and promote new growth.

Espalier: Espalier is a specialized pruning technique where plants are trained to grow flat against a wall or trellis in a specific pattern. It is often used for fruit trees or ornamental plants.

Canopy Lifting: Canopy lifting involves removing lower branches from trees to provide clearance for pedestrians, vehicles, or structures below while maintaining the upper canopy.

Timing

The ideal time for pruning may vary depending on the plant species and your climate, so research specific guidelines for different plants in your garden—pruning at the wrong time can actually be detrimental to their health. For many deciduous trees and shrubs, dormant season (late winter to early spring) is often the best time for pruning. During this period, plants are not actively growing, making it easier to see their structure and make precise cuts. Pruning during dormancy also minimizes the risk of disease transmission and excessive sap flow. In some cases, summer pruning can be beneficial. It is often done to control vigorous growth or shape plants during their active growing season. However, avoid pruning during hot and dry periods as it can stress the plant. Evergreen trees and shrubs can be pruned any time, but it's generally recommended to avoid doing any heavy pruning during extreme weather conditions or during periods of active growth.

If you have flowering plants, consider their bloom time. Some plants bloom on old wood (growth in previous years), while others do so on new wood (recent growth); pruning at the wrong time can prevent flowering. You can prune plants that bloom on old wood during spring right after they flower. Generally, late winter or early spring is a common time for fruit tree pruning, but if you need to prune trees or shrubs for safety reasons, do so as soon as possible regardless of the season.

Tools

Having the right tools can make all the difference in achieving precise and effective pruning results. Here are some essential pruning tools that every home gardener should have in their arsenal:

Pruning Shears: Also known as hand pruners or secateurs, pruning shears are a must-have tool for any gardener. These handheld cutting tools are perfect for trimming small branches, twigs, and stems up to about 3/4 inch in diameter. Look for bypass pruners, which have a curved blade that slides past a thicker base blade, providing clean and precise cuts without crushing the plant tissue.

Loppers: For thicker branches that are too large for pruning shears, loppers come to the rescue. Loppers have long handles and larger blades that provide extra leverage and cutting power. They are ideal for cutting branches up to about two inches in diameter. Choose loppers with sharp blades and ergonomic handles for comfortable use.

Pruning Saw: When dealing with larger branches or even small trees, a pruning saw is an indispensable tool. Pruning saws have sharp teeth that are designed to cut through thick wood quickly and efficiently. Look for a folding saw with a curved blade for easier maneuverability in tight spaces.

Hedge Shears: If you have hedges or shrubs that need regular shaping and trimming, hedge shears are

1 Pruning saw **2** Pruning shears **3** Lopper **4** Safety goggles **5** Pole pruner saw blade attachement
6 Hedge shears **7** Gardening gloves

essential. These long-bladed shears are designed specifically for cutting through dense foliage and creating clean, straight lines. Look for hedge shears with adjustable tension settings and comfortable grips.

Pole Pruner: For reaching high branches without the need for a ladder, a pole pruner is a handy tool. Pole pruners consist of a long pole with a pruning saw or lopper attachment at the end. They allow you to safely trim high branches from the ground, making them ideal for taller trees.

Gloves and Safety Gear: Pruning can be a physically demanding task, so it's important to protect yourself. Invest in a good pair of gardening gloves to protect your hands from thorns, sharp edges, and blisters. Additionally, always be sure to wear safety goggles to shield your eyes from any flying debris, and consider using knee pads or a kneeling mat for extra comfort during ground-level pruning.

6

7

Pruning Hazard: Poison Ivy

Dealing with poison ivy requires caution and proper protective measures due to the plant's ability to cause skin irritation and allergic reactions. Here are some tips for staying itch-free and getting the job done safely.

Dress for success: Wear long sleeves, long pants, long gloves, and closed-toe shoes to protect your skin. It's also a good idea to wear goggles or safety glasses to shield your eyes from any airborne particles.

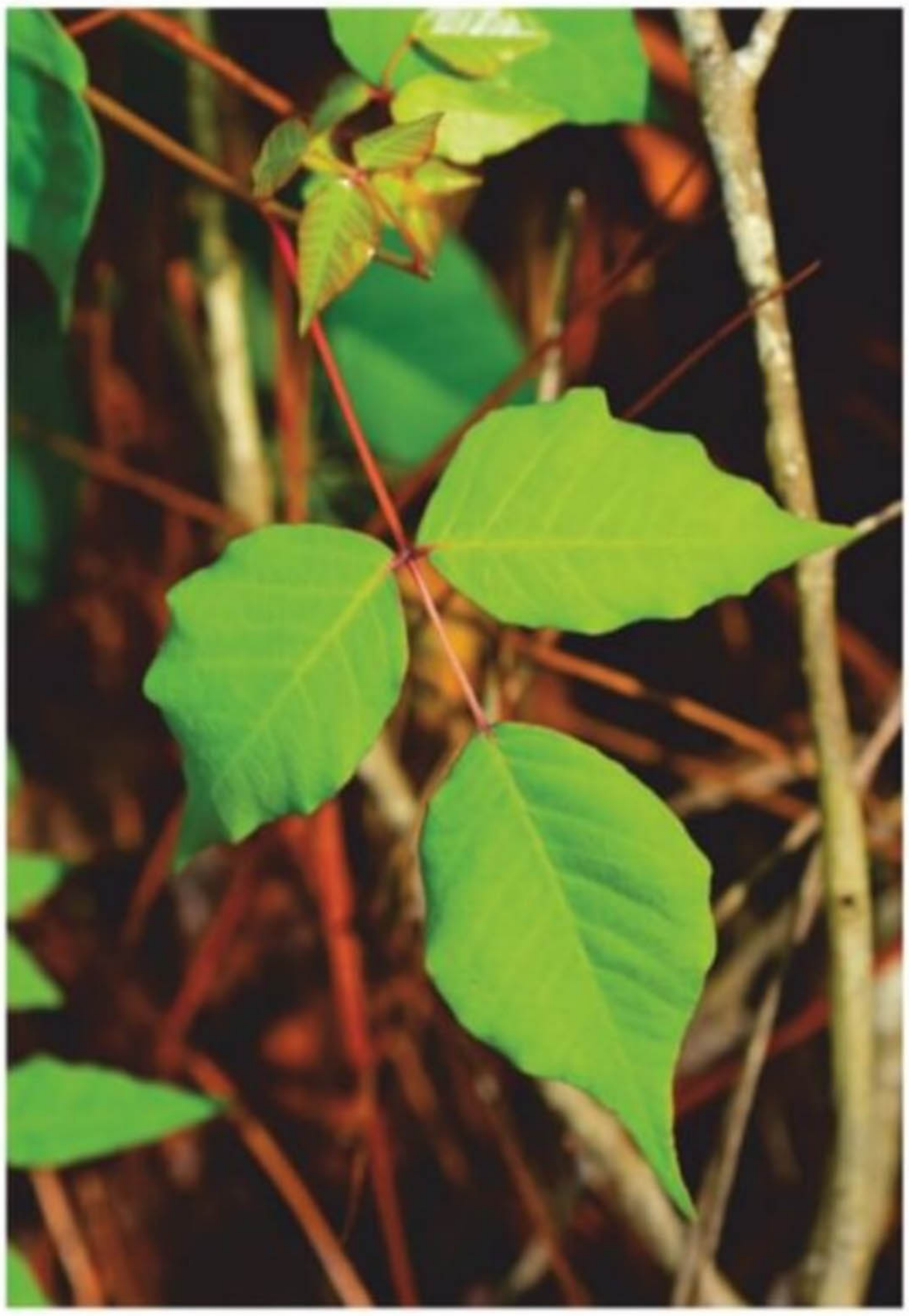
Grab your tools: You'll want a pair of long-handled pruning shears or loppers to keep a safe distance from the plant.

Time it right: The best time to prune poison ivy is during early spring or late fall when the plant is less likely to have leaves, which hold most of the irritation-causing oil. This makes it easier to avoid accidentally touching it.

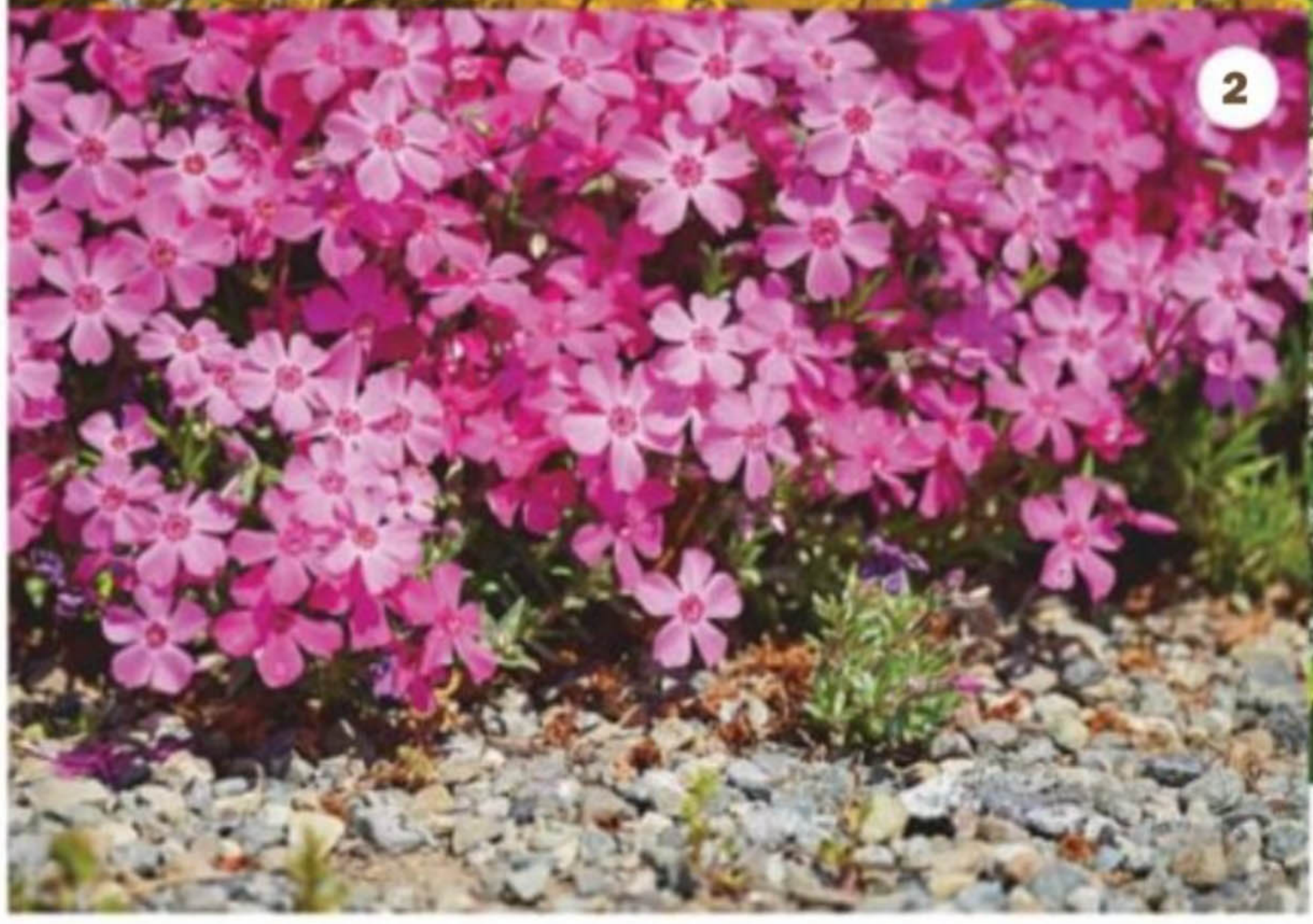
Dig or cut close: Rip out the roots, or at least cut the stems of the plant as close to the ground as possible.

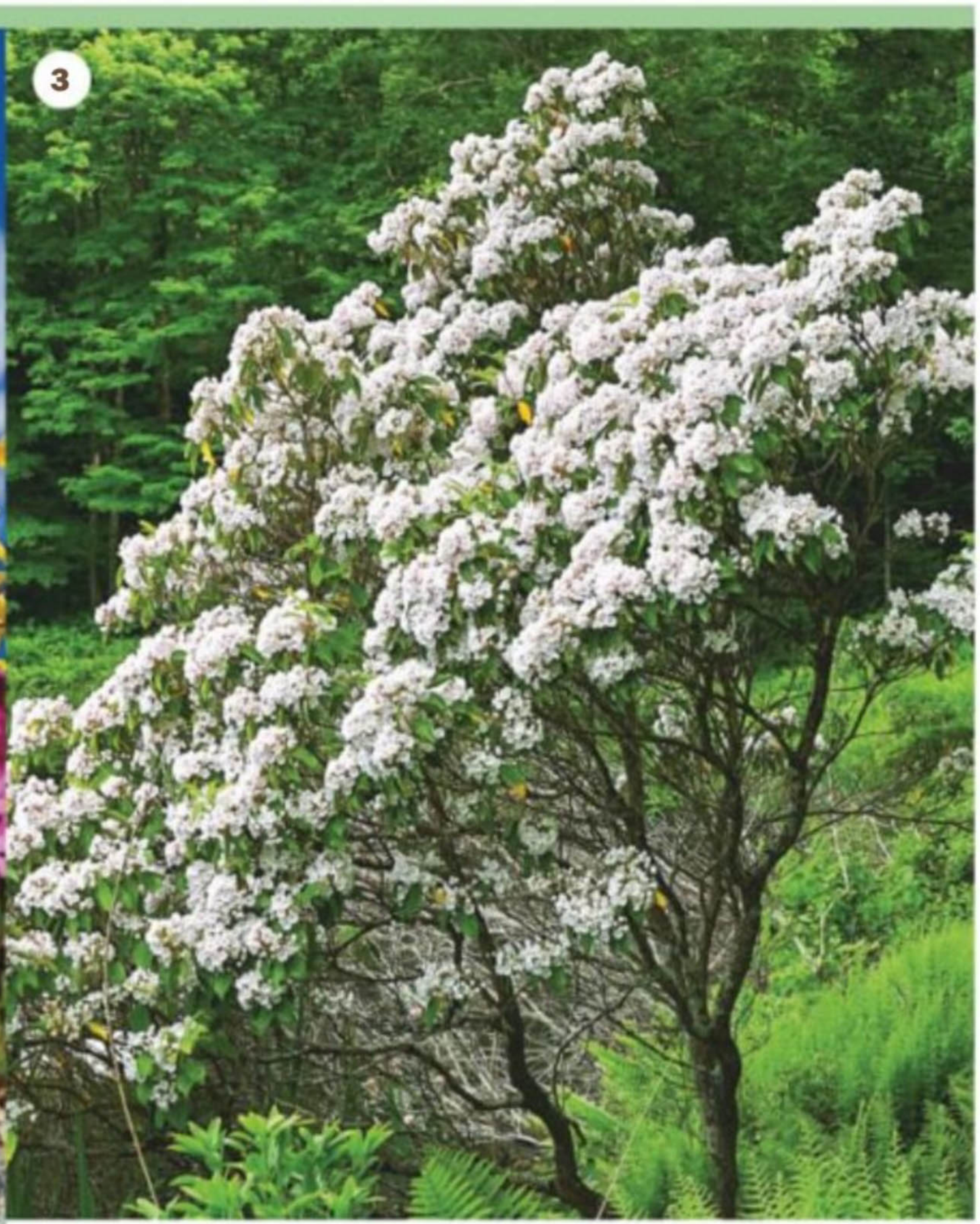
Bag carefully: Place any plant material into a heavy-duty garbage bag, being careful not to break or crush the stems, as this can release more of the irritating oils.

Clean up: Wash your tools with soap and water to remove any lingering oils, and then wash your skin thoroughly.



As the old adage goes: "Leaves of three, let it be."





1 Bright yellow forsythia **2** Vibrant pink phlox subulata
3 A flowering moutain laurel shrub

Plant-Specific Instructions

Different plants require unique approaches. Here's a little cheat sheet for some common garden dwellers:

Flowering Perennials: Cut back faded flowers and weak stems, encouraging the growth of fresh foliage and blooms.

Evergreen Shrubs and Trees: Start by removing any dead or diseased branches throughout the year. To maintain their shape and density, selectively trim back new growth using sharp pruning shears. Avoid cutting into the growth on last year's stems or branches (known as "old wood"), as it may not regenerate.

Ornamental Grasses: Trim back in late winter or early spring—before any new growth begins. Cut the entire plant back to a few inches above the ground, removing old foliage. This will encourage fresh growth and prevents the grass from becoming overgrown.

Groundcovers: Occasional trimming will help prevent groundcovers from becoming invasive or overgrown. Trim them back after their blooming period to remove spent flowers and encourage compact growth.

No matter what plant you're pruning, always make clean cuts at a slight angle, about a quarter inch above a bud or branch collar. And don't get too prune-happy! Avoid removing more than a third of the plant's growth, as this can stress the plant.

Slow and Steady

When pruning, it's important to periodically take a step back and ensure you're not getting a little too chop-happy. "Pruning can make problems worse," warns Anna Hauser in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. If in doubt, just put down the shears. "Pruning stimulates bud growth and encourages growth. If you shorten a branch to the exact spot where it grows over the sidewalk, for example, you will quickly find yourself with many branches instead of just one budding out from that point. Pruning not only affects the immediate shape and size of a tree, it also affects the vigor and health of the tree as it responds to the pruning cuts over the next growing season," Hauser explains.

Once you're done, take a rest, and then check for anything you missed. "After things leaf out that you pruned earlier, go back and have another look. There will be a stem that didn't flush, or a bud that didn't break after all. This is a good chance to do that detailed, picky pruning," advises Jeff Jabco, director of grounds and coordinator of horticulture at the Scott Arboretum of Pennsylvania's Swarthmore College in in *The New York Times*.

Clippings

Avoid composting or reusing prune clippings from infected plants, as this practice can spread pests and disease in your garden and others. As for the rest of your clippings, you can compost them, turn them into mulch, or recycle them. To compost, chop them into smaller pieces to speed up the decomposi-

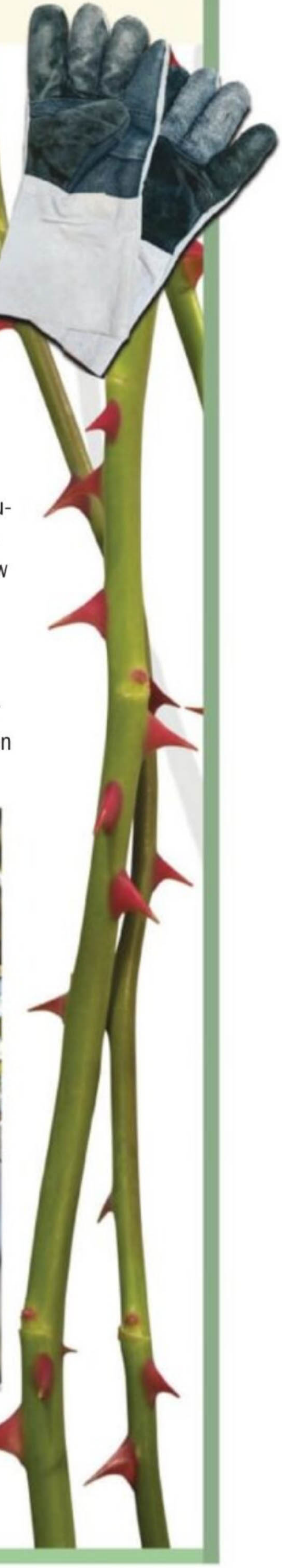
Festuca glauca, an ornamental grass, needs to be periodically cut back to promote even growth.

tion process; the clippings will break down and contribute organic matter to your compost, enriching it with nutrients. If the clippings are small and thin, you can use them as mulch around your plants. Spread a layer of the clippings around the base of your plants to help retain moisture in the area, stop weed growth, and regulate the soil temperature. Don't have space to compost or mulch? See if your neighborhood or community recycling center takes garden waste donations, which ensures that the clippings are properly recycled.

A group of fading hydrangea blossoms after being pruned

Pruning Hazard: Stingers

Ouch! Pruning can get a little wild, especially if your garden is home to stingers of the plant or bug variety. Between mischievous wasps and thorny plants waiting to snag an unsuspecting gardener, take extra care to keep stings and scratches at bay.



Safety first: Wear protective clothing like long sleeves and pants as well as closed-toe shoes to minimize the risk of stings or scratches. Thick gloves are also a must to shield your hands from sharp thorns.

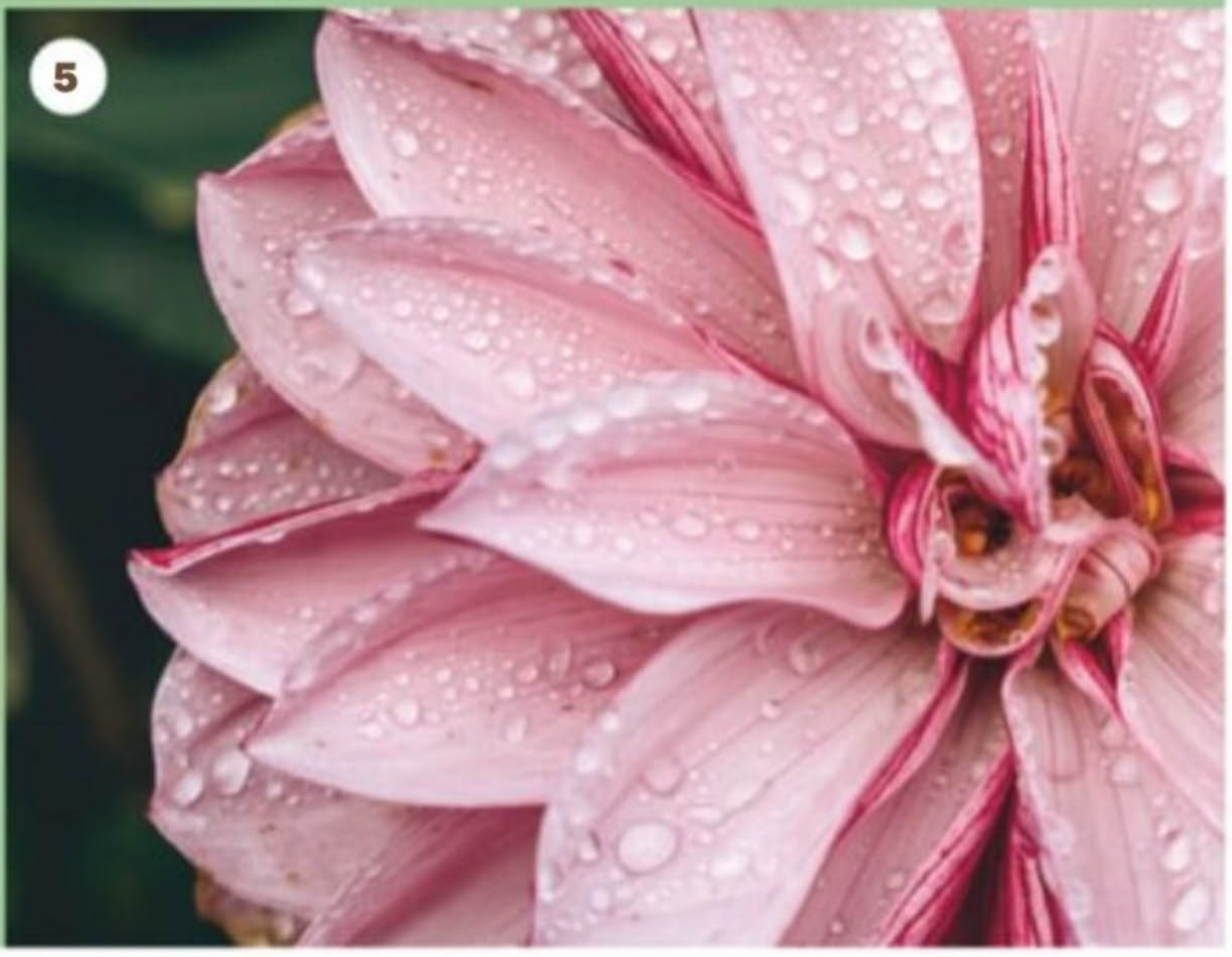
Wait them out: Bees and wasps are typically more active during the day, so consider pruning early in the morning or late in the evening when they're more likely to be inside their nests. For thorny plants, the best time is during their dormant season, which is usually late winter or early spring. During this time, the plants are less likely to have new growth and fewer thorns.

Take a good look: Before you start, look for signs of any wasp or bee hives, and inspect branches before reaching for them to make sure there aren't any hidden surprises waiting to puncture your skin.

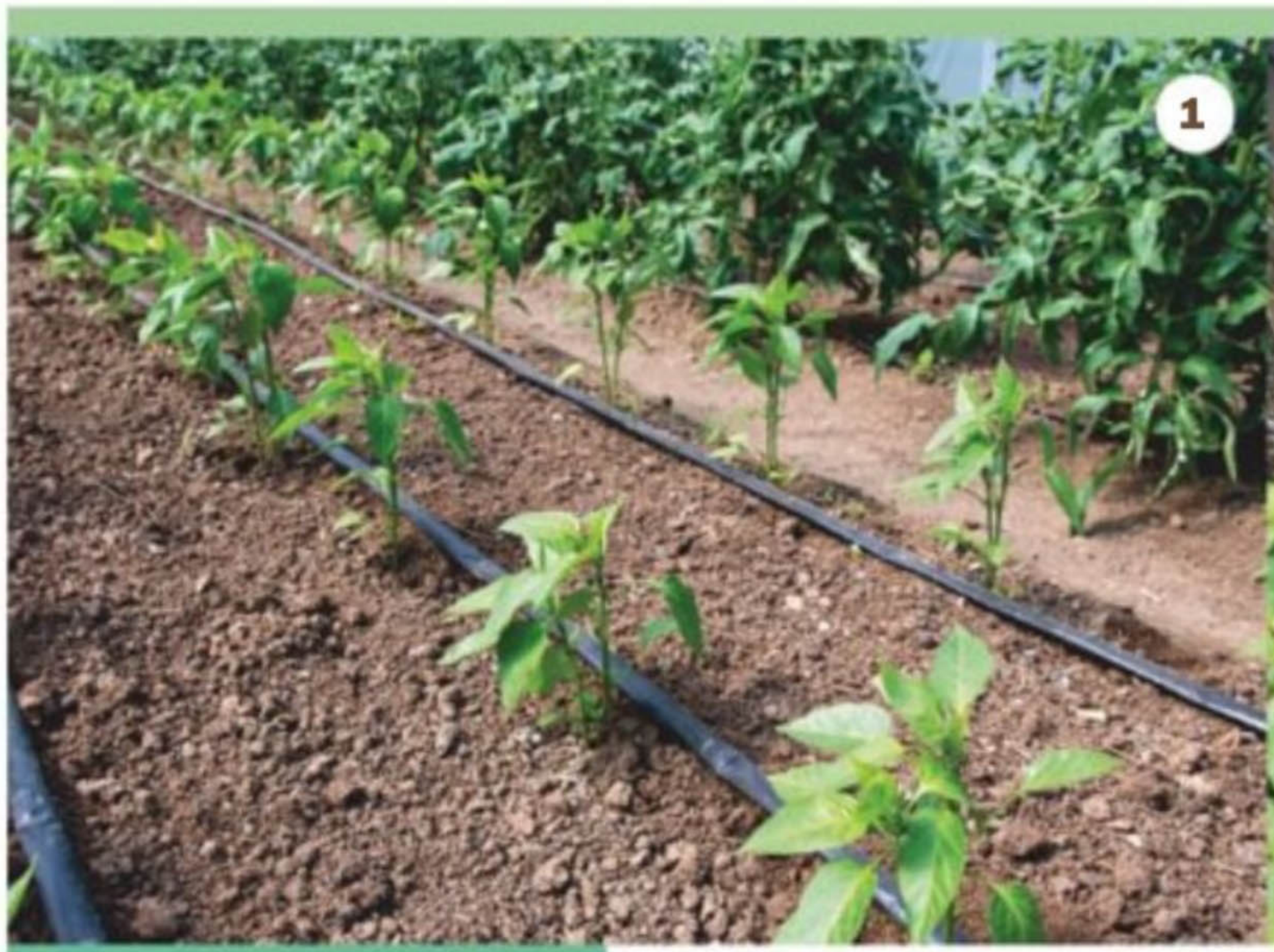
Honeybees are great for your garden—but few people want to house a whole swarm. Contact a local beekeeper to safely move them to a new home.

Thirst Quenchers

The key steps to follow to make sure you have a happy, hydrated garden



1 Seedlings, like these pansies, need frequent gentle watering. **2** A simple watering can allows for focused efficiency. **3** Don't let up on watering tomatoes as they ripen. **4** Hostas are incredibly hardy plants that need little watering beyond rain. **5** Morning is the best time to water flowers like this pink dahlia.



1 Tomato and pepper plants set up with a drip irrigation system for watering **2** Watering rosemary before planting in a backyard garden

Just as humans require different nourishment, each variety of plant has unique hydration needs. By mastering proper watering techniques, amounts, and timing for various types of plants, you can optimize your garden's potential and grow a picturesque haven right in your backyard.

Keeping a rain barrel near your garden is a great way to collect fresh water to feed your plants.

Your Options

Consider the following guidelines for the three major factors when it comes to watering your garden: your method, amount, and timing.

Methods

Hand-watering: This is the old-fashioned way—just you, your garden, and a can or hose. This allows for precise watering, ensuring that water reaches the roots, but it can get time-consuming as your garden expands.

Sprinklers: Adjust the spray radius and intensity, and sprinklers will distribute water quickly and evenly. Sprinkler systems are ideal for larger areas where wide, uniform coverage is needed.

Drip Irrigation System: This system delivers water directly to the plant roots through a network of tubes and emitters. It's more of a commitment, but it provides efficient and consistent watering while minimizing water loss through evaporation. If you have plants with different water requirements within the same garden bed, a drip system allows you to customize watering for each.

Amounts

Vegetables and Herbs: Keep the soil consistently moist until seedlings are established. Then, water deeply and evenly, ensuring the soil stays moist but not waterlogged. Aim for about one to two inches of water per week, depending on weather conditions.

Annuals: Water thoroughly when the top inch of soil feels dry. Provide enough water to moisten the root zone without saturating it.

Perennials: Water plants deeply yet infrequently, so the soil has time to dry out a bit between waterings. Aim for about one inch of water per week during active growth periods.

Shrubs and Trees: Water deeply immediately after planting and continue regular watering until the plant is established (usually within the first year). Once established, water deeply, ensuring that the entire root zone is thoroughly moistened, and allow the soil to dry out slightly between waterings.

Flowers: Keep the soil moist—most flowering plants thrive on about one inch of water per week.

Timing

Rise and shine! The early morning is usually the best time to water your plants since it reduces evaporation while providing a day's worth of hydration. If you're a night owl, evening watering allows plants to recover from daytime heat, so it's the next best thing after early morning watering. If you do water your garden at night, just be careful of overwatering, as excess soil moisture can contribute to fungal growth overnight. Avoid watering midday, as doing so during the hottest part of the day can result in more water lost to evaporation, and can actually scorch leaves.

Much Ado About Mulch

Elevate your gardening prowess one scoop at a time.

Having a wheelbarrow and shovel on hand for mulching days can make your life a lot easier.

Recycled woodchips come from the bark of trees and other plant debris.

Mulching around your plants can keep in moisture and help prevent weeds in your garden.

Mulch doesn't have to be wood: these round cypress bushes pop amid a two-tone base of gravel and stones.

Meet your outdoor garden's savior: mulch! Essentially, mulch is just a layer of protective material spread on top of the soil—but it's also a game changer. Adding this simple yet extraordinarily helpful step to your gardening routine will not only help your plants thrive, but you'll also save time on weeding, watering, and pest control.

Why Mulch?

Mulching isn't just about adding a pretty backdrop to your garden beds; it offers a wealth of advantages:

Moisture retention: Mulch reduces water evaporation from the soil, meaning you won't need to water as often.

Weed prevention: A proper layer of mulch blocks sunlight from reaching pesky weed seeds, effectively stifling their growth.

Temperature regulation: Mulch insulates plant roots from excessively hot or cold temperatures by insulating the soil.

Nutrient enrichment: As organic mulches decompose, they enrich soil with essential nutrients for healthy plant growth.

Materials

The universe of mulching materials available to you is vast! Choose between organic options like wood chips, shredded bark, pine needles, or leaves, or consider more permanent mulches like rubber or gravel. Ultimately, match your material choice with your garden's unique needs—each type has distinct benefits.

Compost: A blend of decomposed organic matter that also enriches the soil with key nutrients.

Bark chips or shredded bark: Attractive and long-lasting options that are perfect for perennial beds or around trees.

Straw or hay: Highly effective in controlling annual weeds and perfect for vegetable gardens.

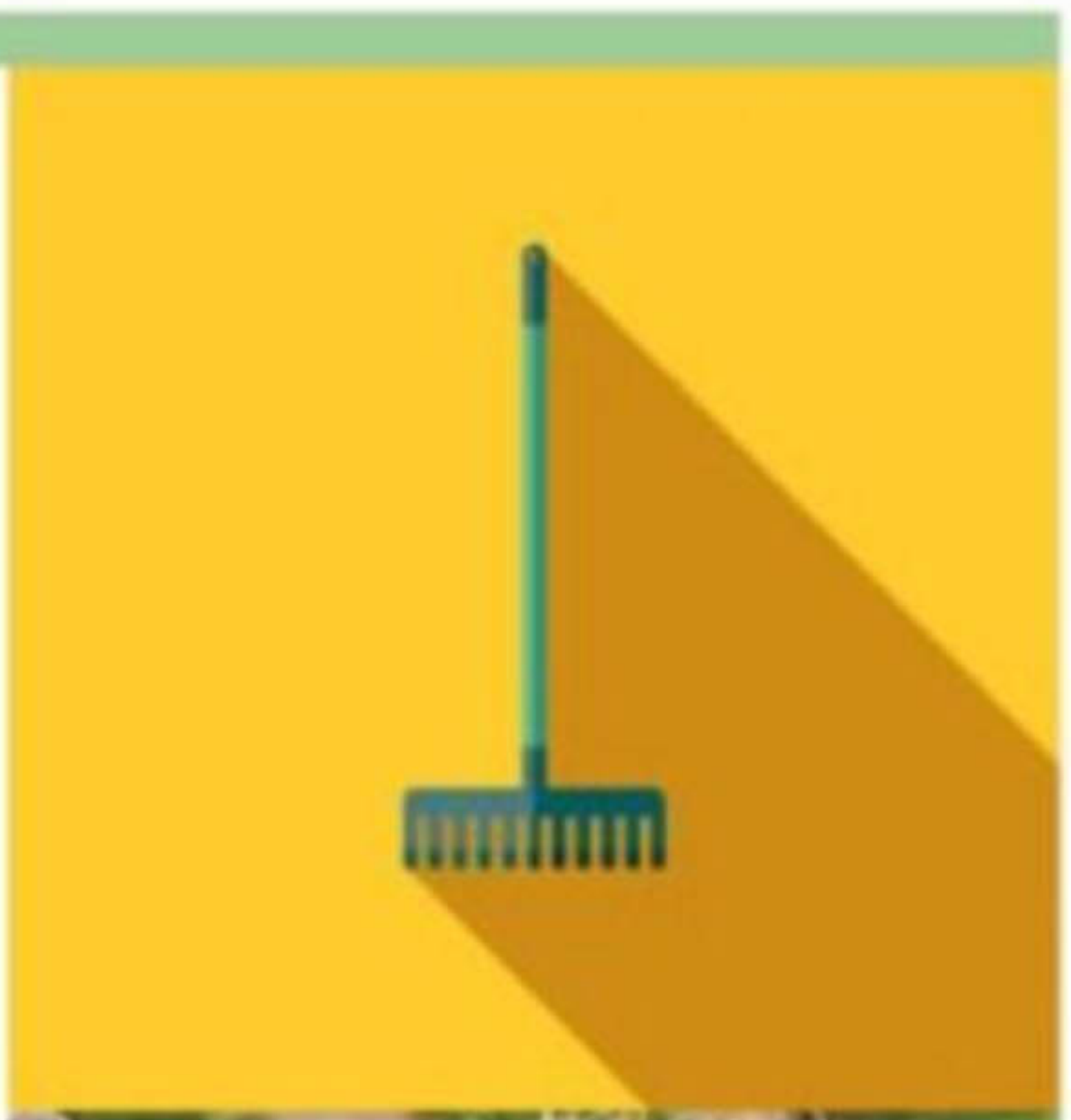
Gravel or crushed stone: A practical choice for paths or around plants that require well-drained soil.

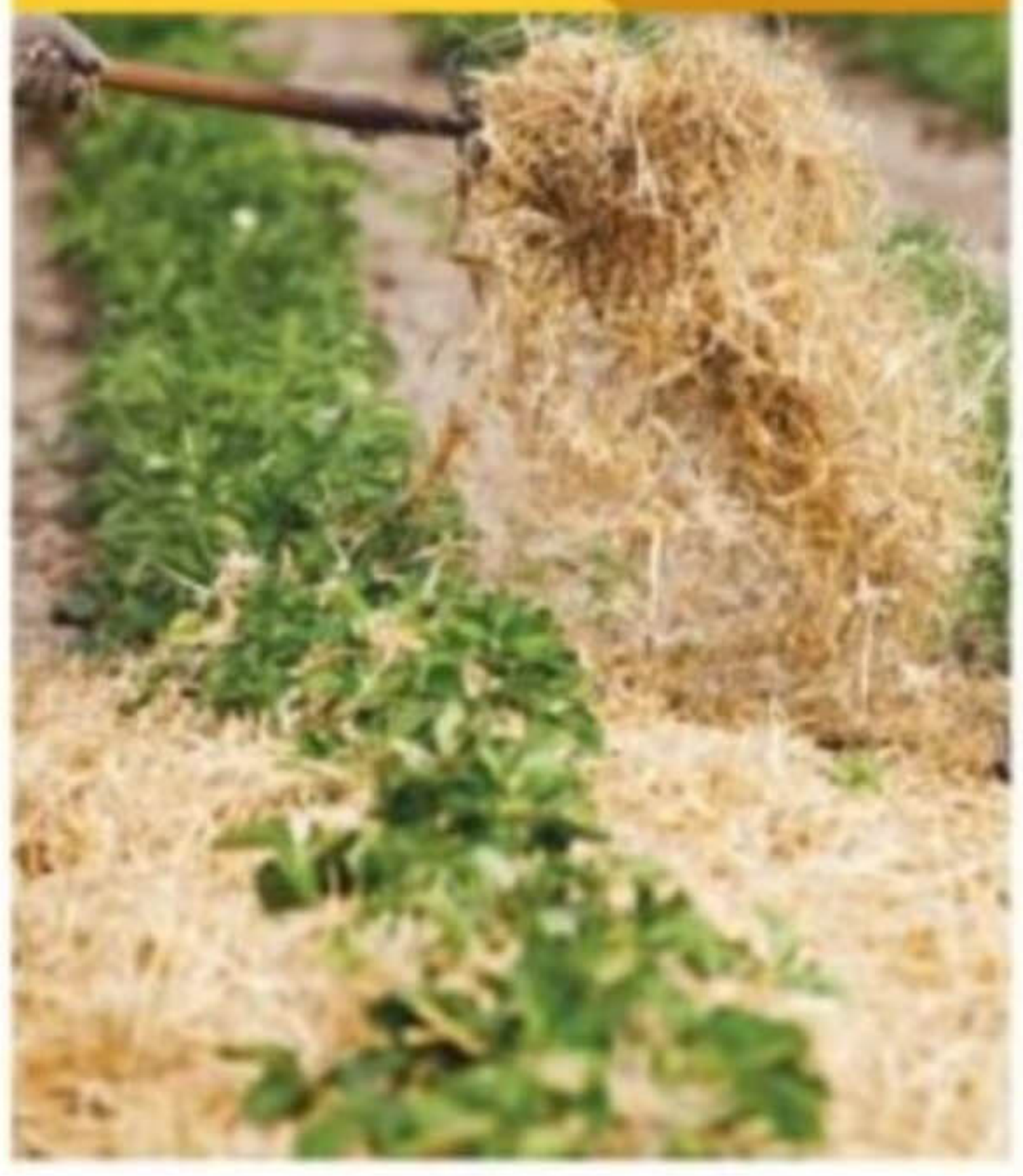
Landscape fabrics or plastic sheets: Efficient weed control in container gardens or under paved areas.

Getting Started

Timing is everything when it comes to mulching. The best time to start is during the spring when soil temperatures warm up and plants begin their new growth cycle. Adding mulch in autumn can also be beneficial as it insulates plant roots from harsh winter weather. Apply mulch in just three steps:

Non-woven landscaping cloth is used as a layer underneath mulch to keep out weeds.





A farmer spreading hay in a strawberry field in Germany

1. Prepare the area. Remove weeds, trim back plants, and level soil to create a smooth surface.

2. Aim for a two- to four-inch layer; too little won't provide many benefits, but too much can suffocate plant roots.

3. Spread the mulch evenly over the soil surface using a rake or your hands. Keep mulch one to two inches away from tree trunks and plant stems to prevent diseases and pests.

Maintenance

You'll still need to run a few regular check-ups on your garden's mulch:

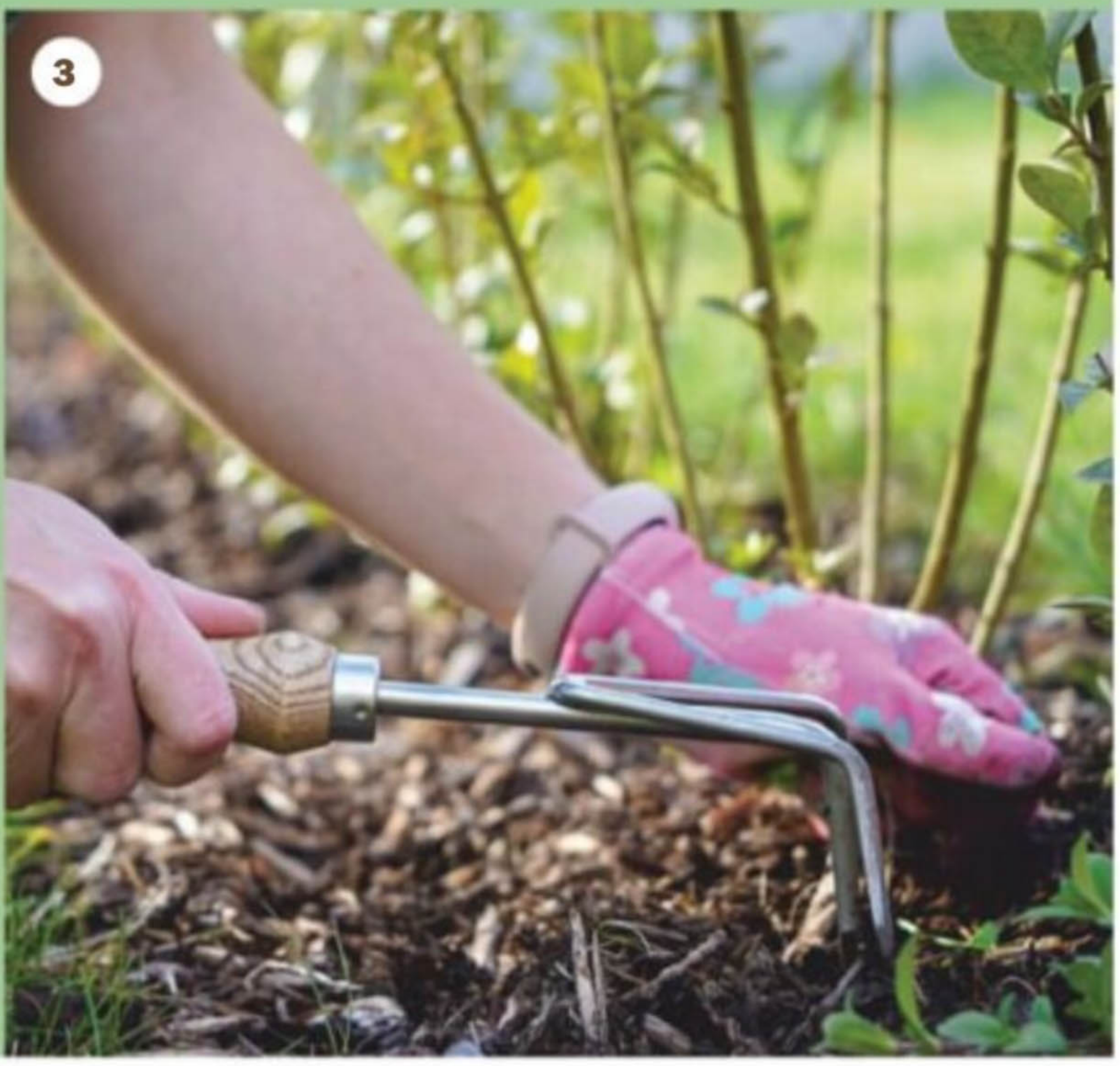
Inspect annually: Check and replace spots of mulch as needed to maintain a full, even layer.

Fluff it up: Rake organic mulches in the off-season to prevent them from becoming too matted or compacted.

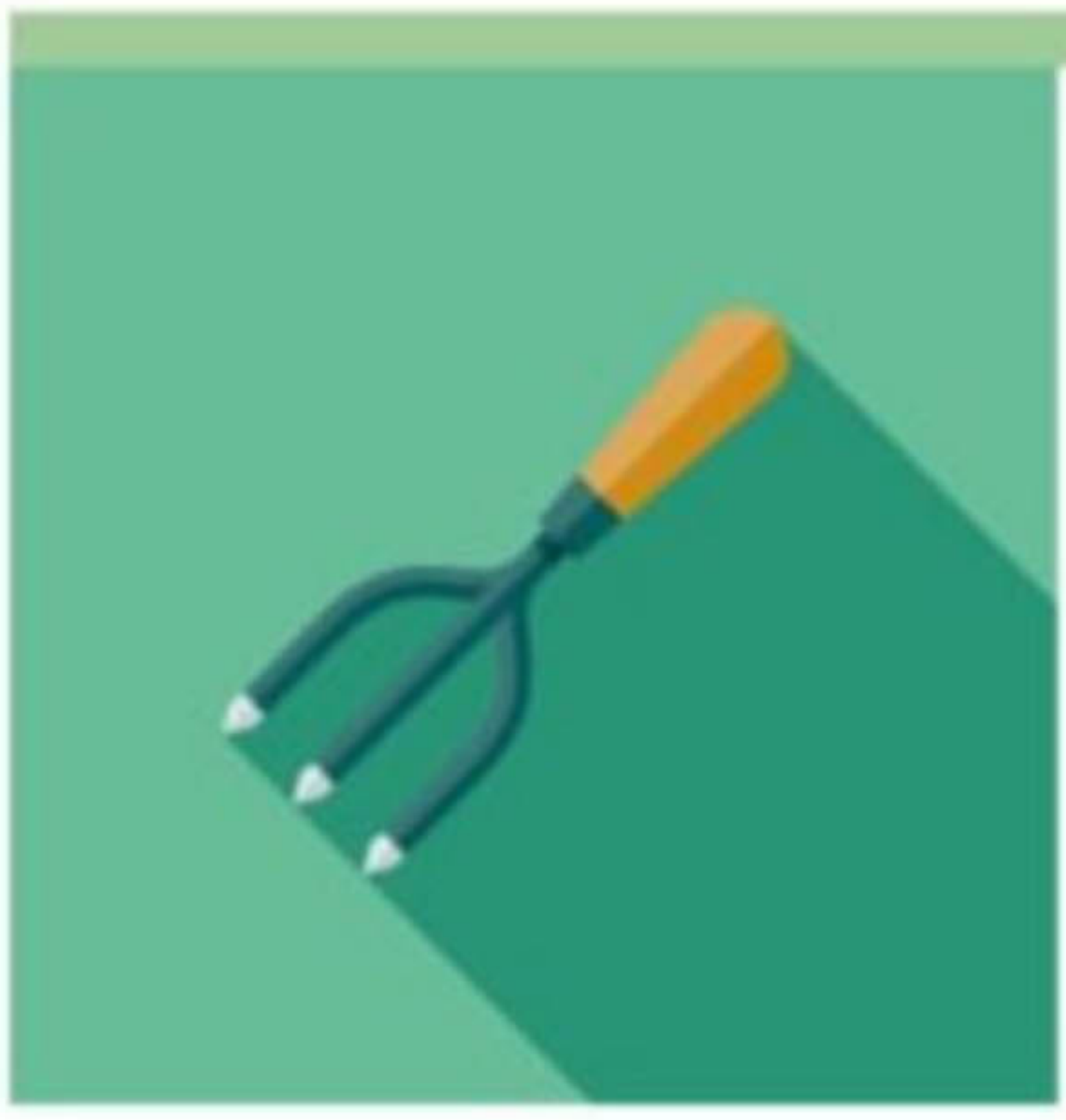
Watch out for weed breakthroughs: Keep an eye out for unwanted weeds and remove them immediately.

Weeding Out Weeds

They may seem endless, but you *can* win the battle over your garden's uninvited guests.



1 Dedicate regular time for weed eradication in your garden, but you can also listen to a podcast, chat with a friend, or just enjoy being in nature! **2** Some weeds, like this dandelion, are edible or can have a home elsewhere. **3** The proper tools for weeding—like gloves and a hand rake—make it much easier.



Ralph Waldo Emerson described weeds as plants "whose virtues have not yet been discovered." Indeed, some gardeners opt to co-exist with them, embracing the silver lining that these natural intruders actually offer some benefits, like attracting pollinators. But for most of us, weeds are the ever-present bane of our backyards, competing for resources with the greenery you purposely planted. And they can be intimidating to tackle, especially for those new to gardening. But it can be both a surprisingly fun mission and a rewarding accomplishment. Up for the challenge?

This vegetable garden boasts weed-blocking cloth as well as stakes, both of which will help the plants grow freely.

ID the Weeds

Before you do battle, do some research. Just as your other plants have different growth patterns, root systems, and preferred conditions, so do weeds. Use field guides, weed identification apps, or online resources to help identify specific weeds so you can devise the most effective tactics for combat.

Manual Removal

Use a garden knife, trowel, hoe, or hand-weeder to loosen the soil around the weed's base, then pull weeds out from the roots to prevent regeneration. Manual removal can actually work well if you do it before the weeds have flowered and dispersed their seeds throughout your garden.

Herbicides

Herbicides may be necessary if other methods fail or you're experiencing an infestation. Make sure to choose herbicides that are specifically formulated for the types of weeds you're targeting to minimize harm to nearby plants. Keep in mind that frequent and indiscriminate use of herbicides can lead to the development of herbicide-resistant weeds.

Solarization

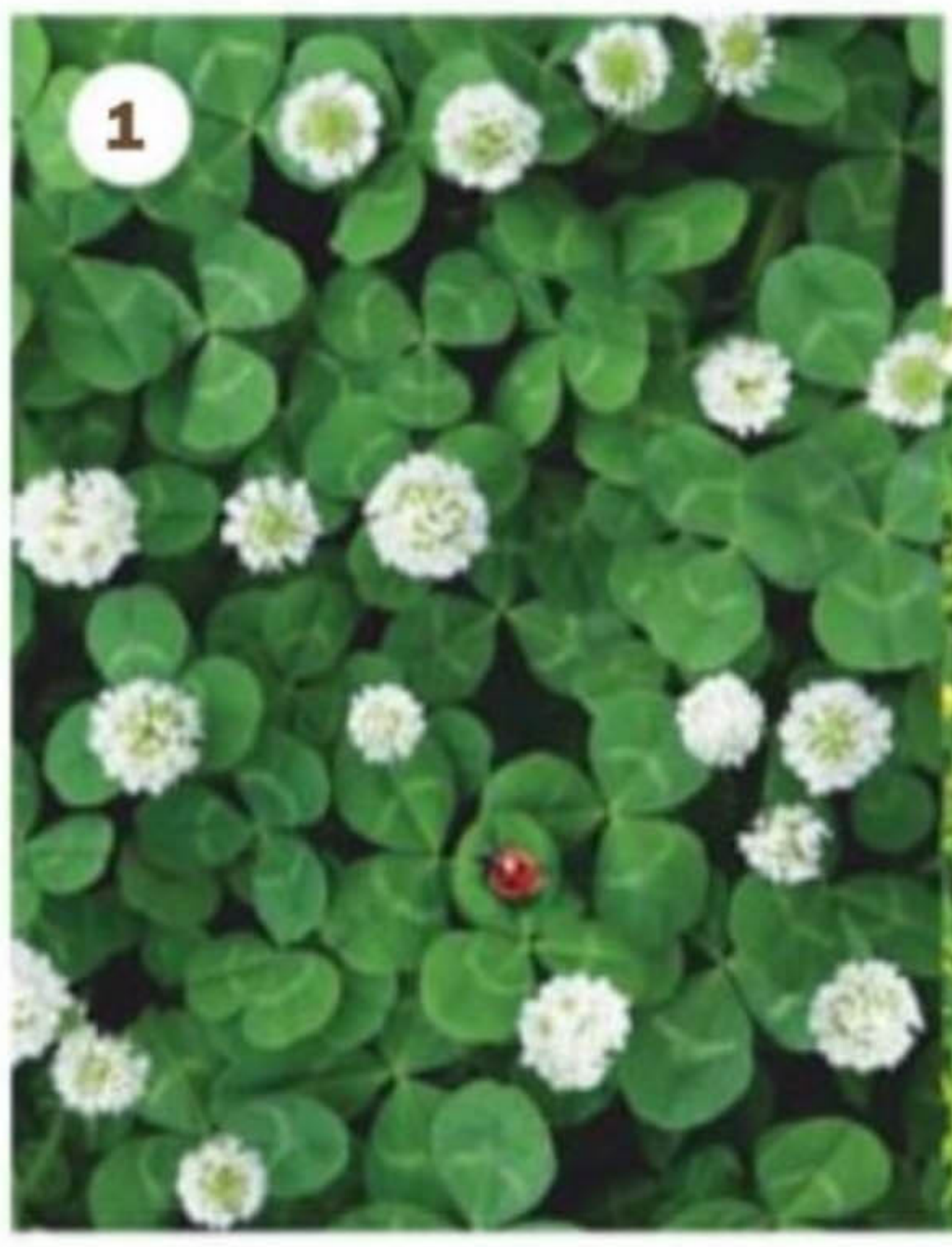
This method involves covering an entire weed-prone area with clear plastic sheets for several weeks, in particular during hot summer months. Depending on your climate, the heat trapped under the plastic kills existing weeds and their seeds by raising soil temperatures.

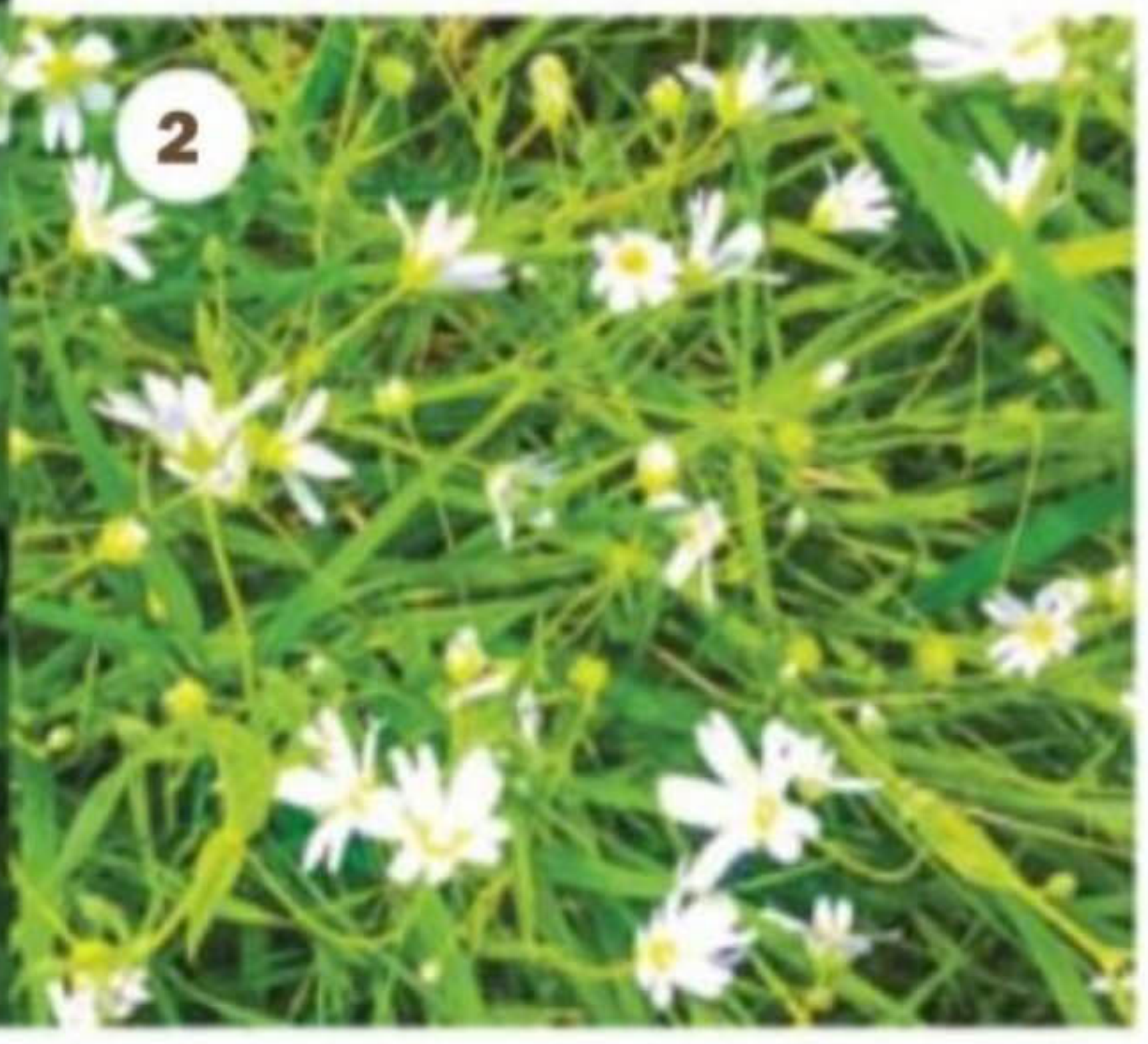
Boiling Water

Pouring boiling water over weeds can effectively kill them by damaging their cell structure. This method is best suited for weeds growing in driveway cracks or between pavers.

Prevention

After you've done the work of getting rid of the weeds in your garden, be proactive in preventing them from coming back. You can do so by mulching, as a thin layer of mulch may prevent weed growth by blocking sunlight, making it harder for pesky interlopers to emerge. You can also choose to plant low-growing ground cover plants that spread quickly, which help crowd out weeds before they have a chance to take root. Lastly, barriers like landscape fabric will prevent weed seeds from reaching the soil and germinating while still allowing water and nutrients to penetrate. This is great for areas where you want to establish new plantings or maintain low-maintenance landscapes.

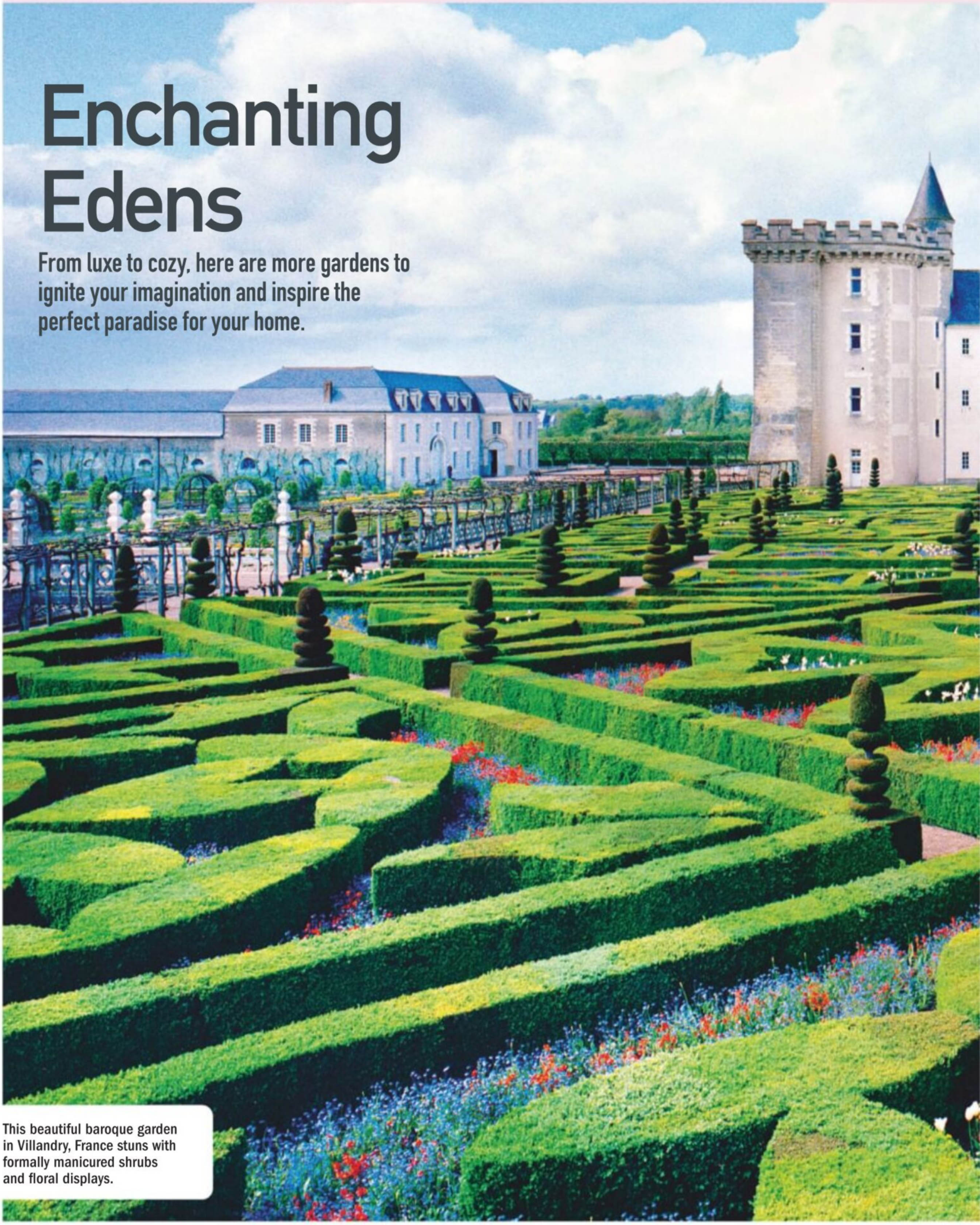




1 Clover is a common weed that many are choopsing to welcome in, or in place of, their lawn grass. **2** Field mouse-ear (aka field chickweed) is another invasive weed common in lawns. **3** Dandelions reseed quickly once they flower.

Enchanting Edens

From luxe to cozy, here are more gardens to ignite your imagination and inspire the perfect paradise for your home.



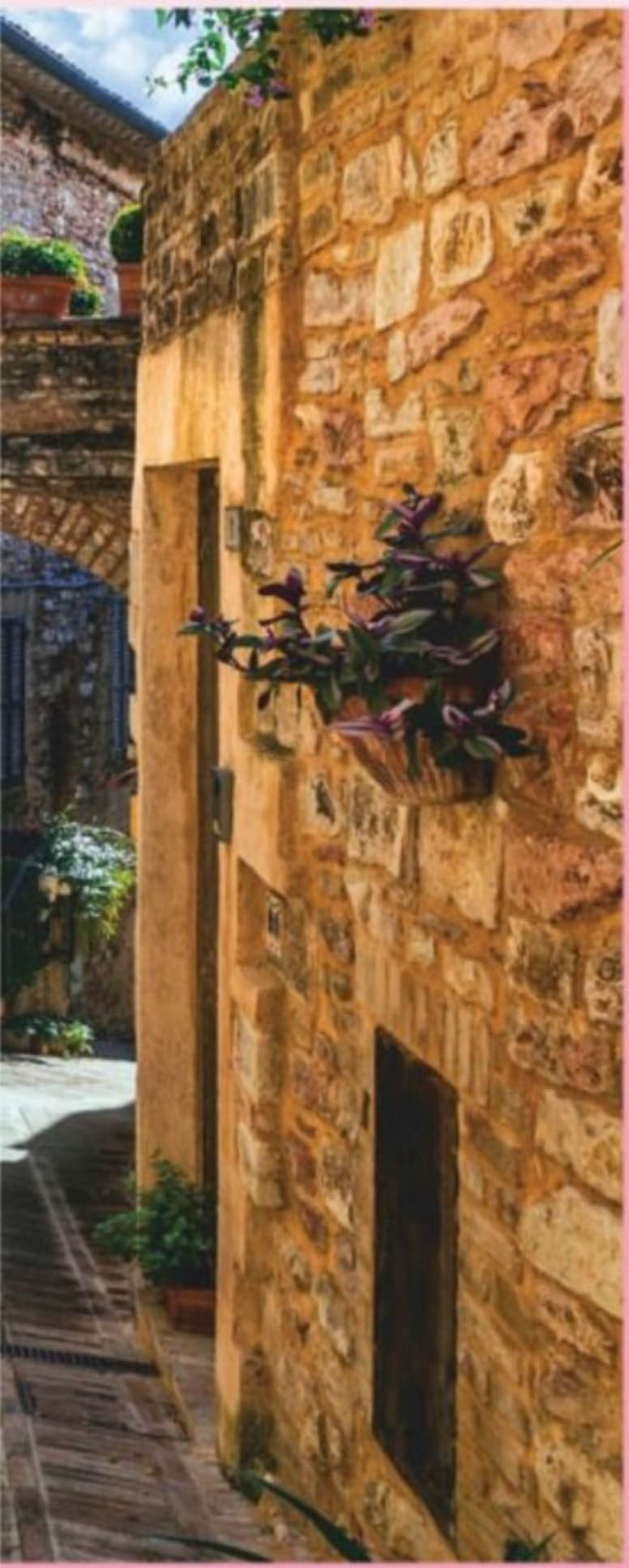
This beautiful baroque garden in Villandry, France stuns with formally manicured shrubs and floral displays.

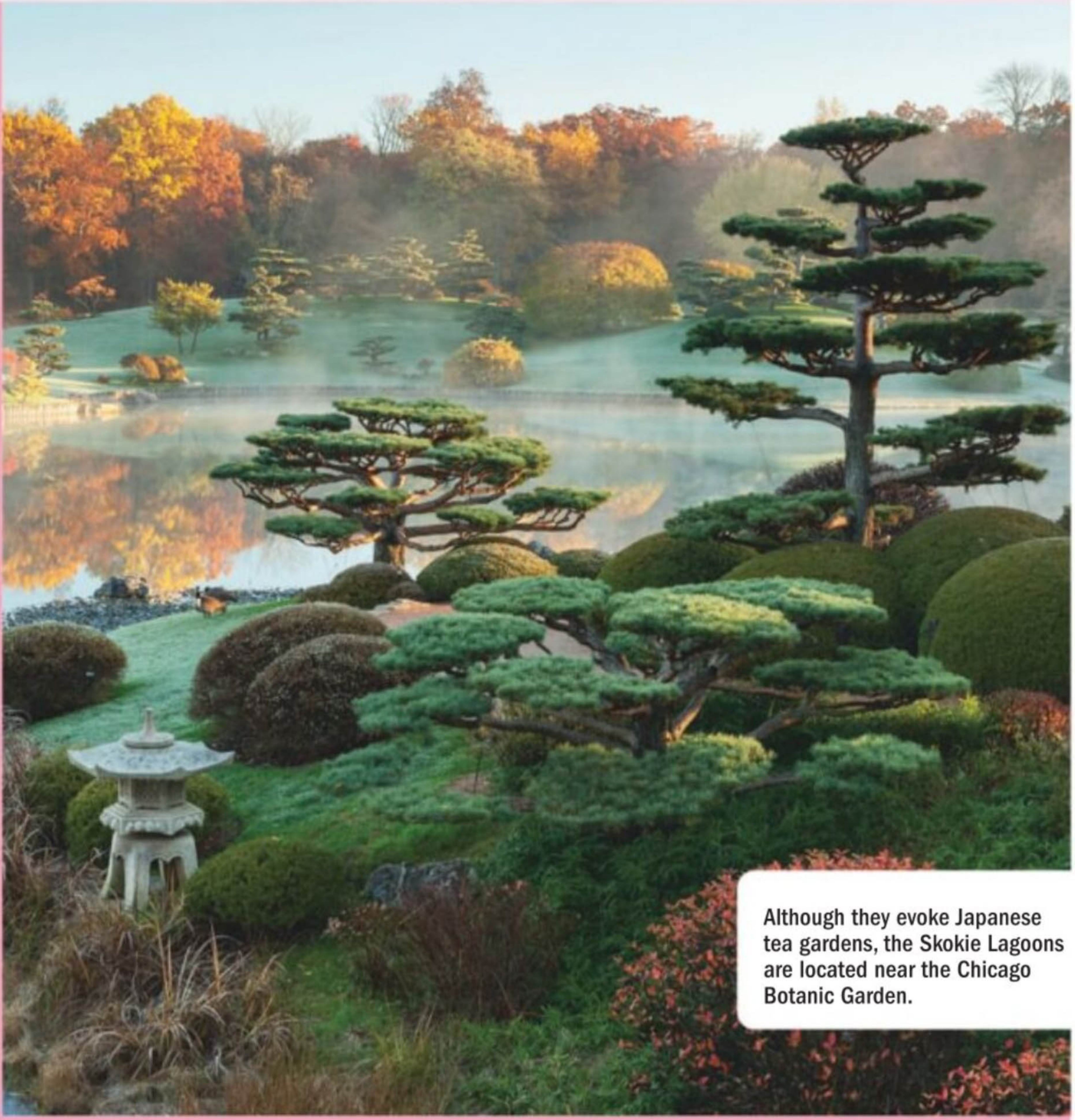
Baroque gardens are designed mathematically and involve strict symmetry rules.

This street in the Umbria region of Italy sprinkles baskets and pots of lush florals and greenery amidst the old stonework.

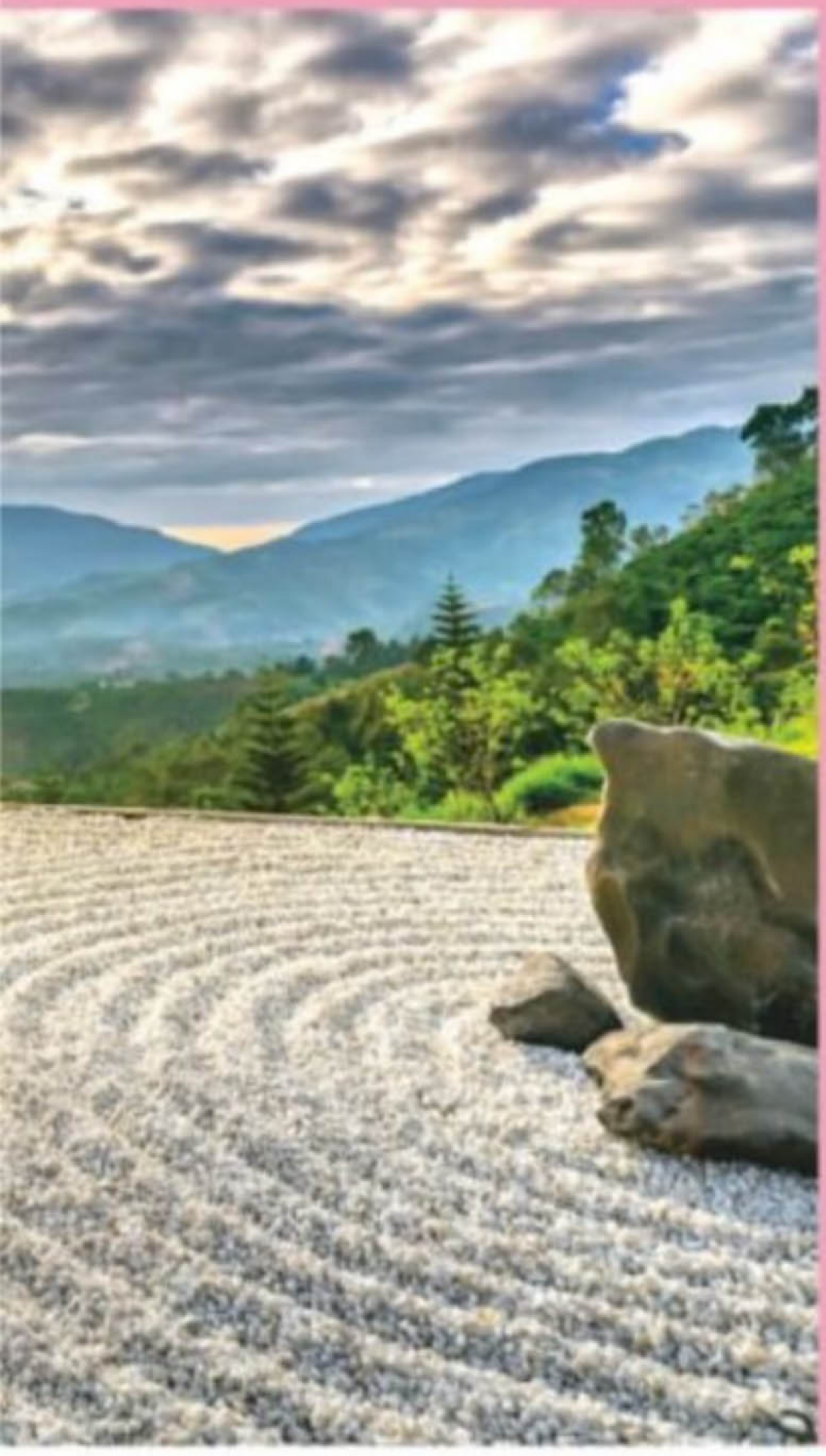
The Keukenhof gardens located in Lisse, Netherlands, one of the world's largest flower gardens.

This peaceful rock garden in Bao Loc, Vietnam evokes the rugged mountains in its stunning vista.





Although they evoke Japanese tea gardens, the Skokie Lagoons are located near the Chicago Botanic Garden.



Even a small backyard nook can be a canvas for a range of foliage and flowers, from lavender to clematis to hydrangea.

If you give your garden proper care and attention, it'll reward you with gorgeous growth.

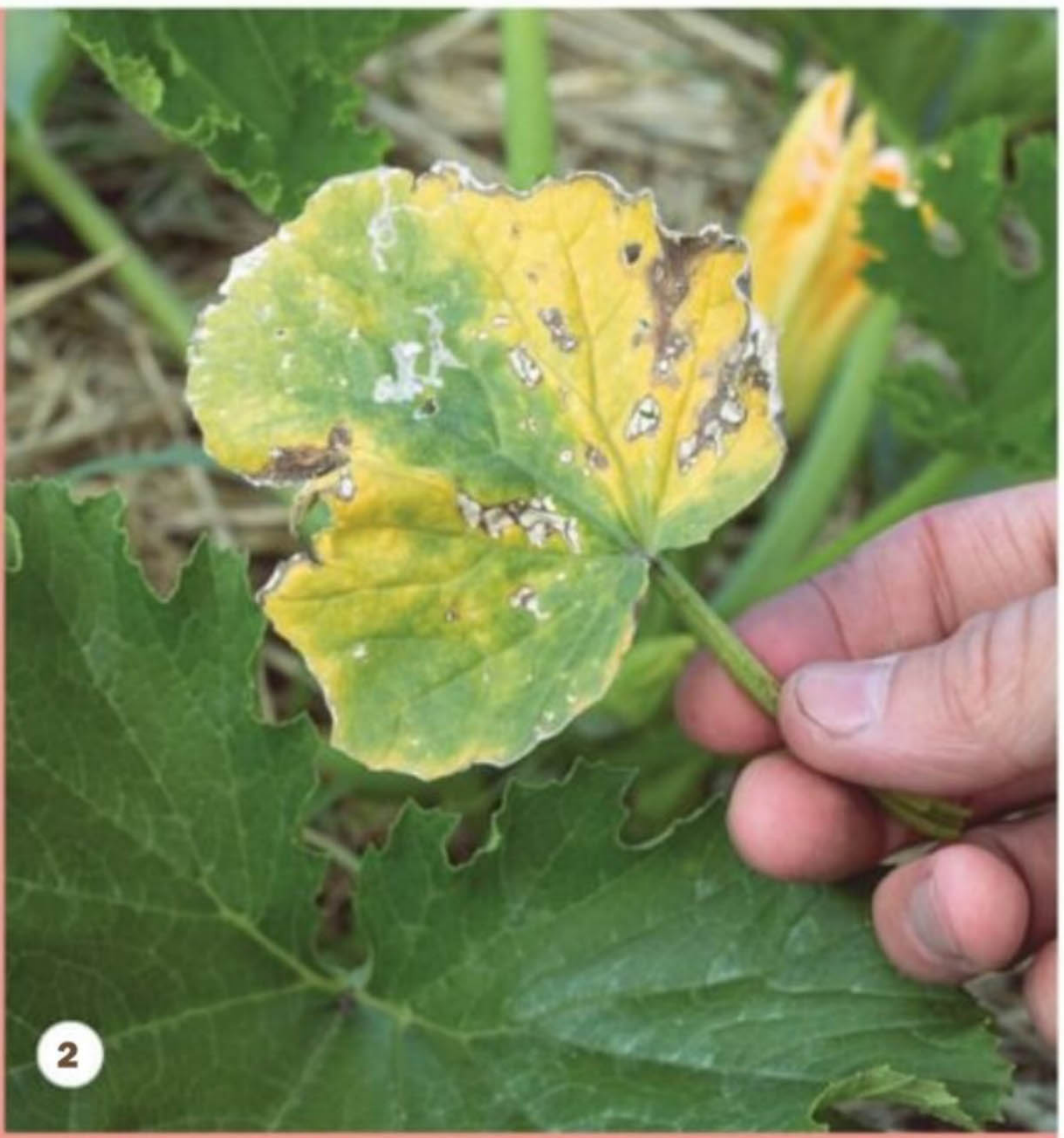
Troubleshooting

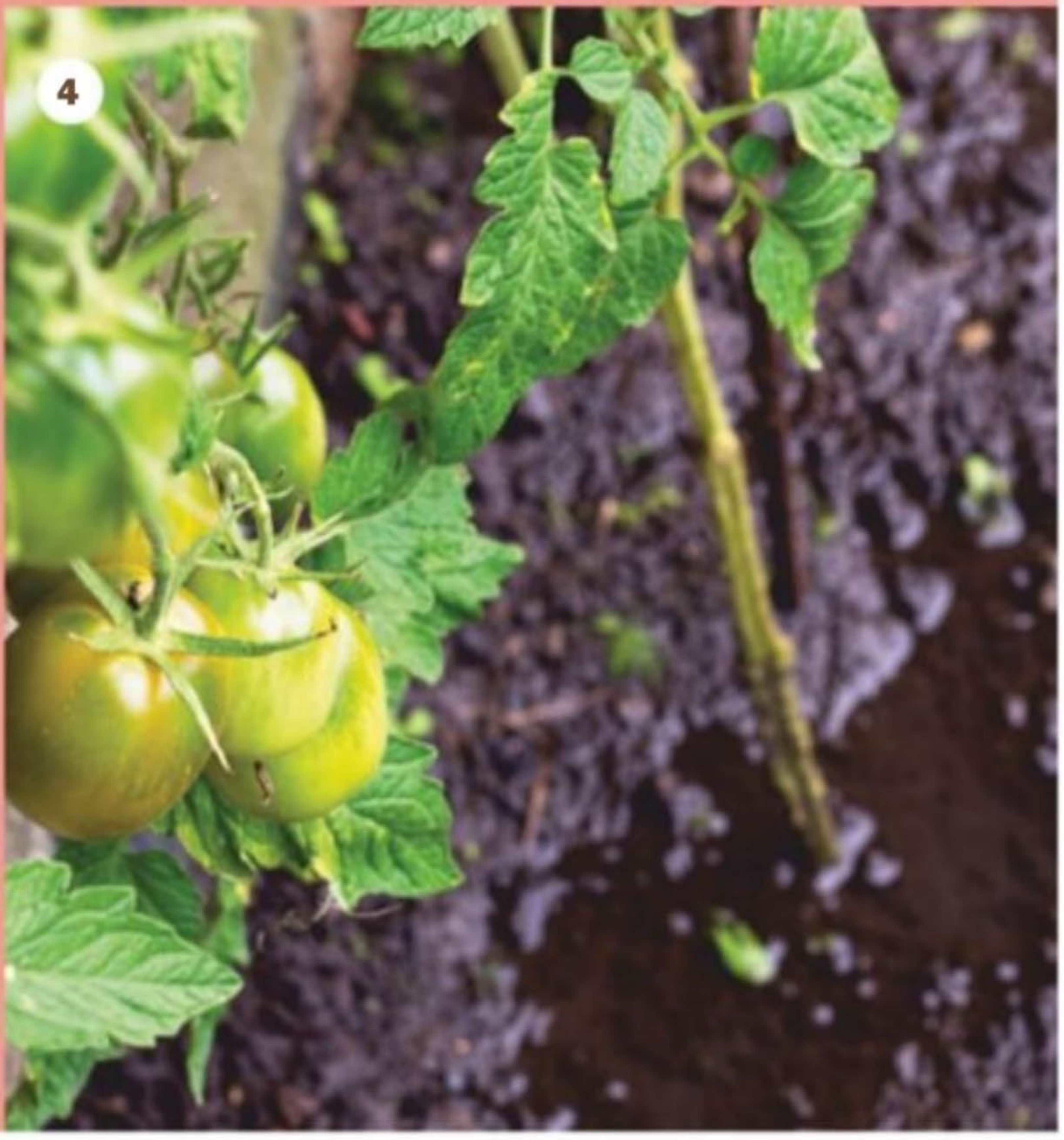
Learn how to identify and overcome the most common gardening problems.

From pesky pests to mysterious plant diseases to droopy leaves, it can sometimes feel like you're doing it all wrong… or your garden is conspiring against you. But even the most experienced gardeners encounter their fair share of challenges along the way. As Martha Stewart herself famously said, "Gardening is a humbling experience." Don't fret—for every bump along the way, there's a whole host of techniques and tools to address it and turn those challenges into opportunities for growth. Get ready to roll up your sleeves, decipher the language of plants, and get your garden back on track.

Overwatering and Underwatering

It's all about balance—here's how to course-correct when your garden gets too much or not enough H20.





1 Root systems can rot when packed into a tight pot with too much water. **2** Necrosis and chlorosis may occur due to a lack of minerals in a plant. **3** Do your research to determine how much water each of your plant types need. **4** Standing water in your garden is a clear sign of overwatering.

For many rose plants, about two inches of water per week is needed to grow optimally.

Finding the right balance of water for your plants is crucial for maintaining a healthy garden, but it's not always as simple as it seems. Underwatering and overwatering are both easy to do accidentally—but by understanding the signs, you can act fast to mitigate the damage and prevent a repeat in the future.

Underwatering

When plants don't get sufficient water, their ability to absorb nutrients from the soil is hindered, affecting growth and making them more susceptible to pests and diseases.

Spot It: Underwatered plants often display visible signs of stress. Leaves may wilt, curl, or turn yellow or brown, and the soil may become dry and crumbly. If a gentle tug on your plant doesn't offer much resistance, the roots may be weak from insufficient water.

Fix It: Give plants a deep watering, ensuring that the moisture reaches their roots. Use a watering can or a spray nozzle on a hose to provide a slow and steady stream of water directly at the base of each plant, and water until you see the soil surrounding the plant become moist.

Prevent It: Establish a regular watering schedule based on the needs of your plants. Check the soil moisture regularly by inserting your finger into the soil up to the second knuckle. If it feels dry, water the plant.

Overwatering

When plants receive more water than they require, the excessive moisture in the soil can lead to root rot and fungal diseases, as well as oxygen deprivation in the root zone. This can weaken the plant's root system and inhibit its ability to absorb nutrients, resulting in stunted growth or even death.

Spot It: Overwatered plants often exhibit signs of stress similar to underwatered plants, such as wilting leaves and yellowing foliage as roots are deprived of oxygen. However, in overwatered plants, the leaves may also appear soft and mushy and the soil may be constantly wet or waterlogged.

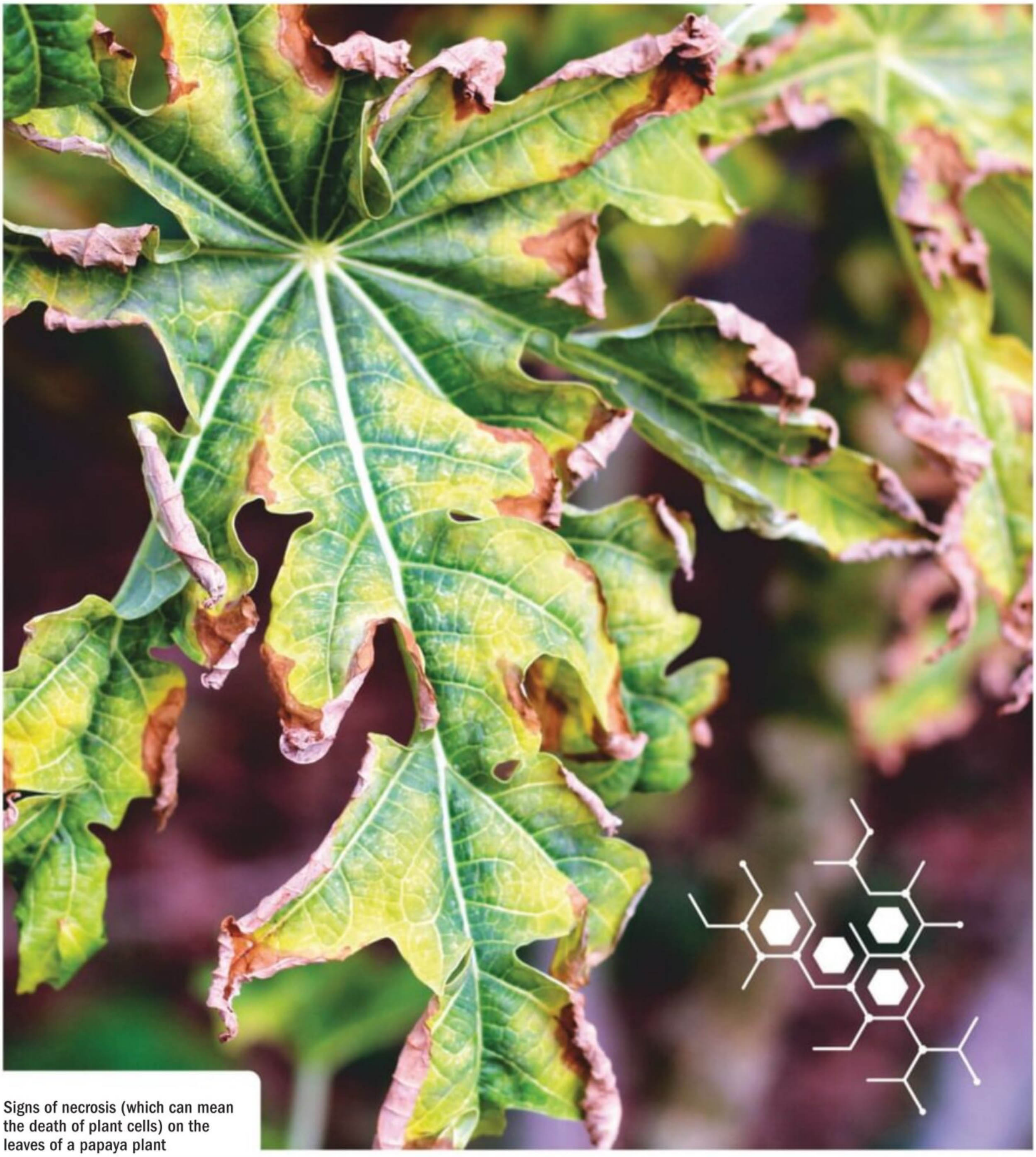
Fix It: Sure, you can't *un*-water your garden, but thankfully you can still take some immediate steps to help it out. If you see standing water, use a shovel or garden trowel to create small trenches that allow water to flow away and drain. While you're at it, gently loosen the soil surface with a garden fork or rake. This will get some air circulation going, speeding up evaporation and helping dry out the soil.

Prevent It: Determine the water needs of your plants and adjust your watering schedule accordingly. Keep in mind you should water when the soil feels slightly dry, but not completely parched. And if poor drainage is often an issue, consider adding mulch to slow the flow of water.

Some plants require much less water, such as succulents like sempervivum flowers.

Signs of Nutritional Deficiencies

The symptoms and culprits of lackluster growth—and how to restore vitality to your plants.



Signs of necrosis (which can mean the death of plant cells) on the leaves of a papaya plant

Plants require a balanced diet and a variety of nutrients to feel their best, just like we do. This means that, just like us, plants can also experience nutritional deficiencies. But by noticing what our plants are trying to tell us, we can help our gardens bounce back and flourish in no time.

Where to Look

As far as where on the plant to spot a deficiency, it depends on the type. "Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium are readily translocated within the plant and are referred to as 'mobile.' Symptoms first appear on older leaves as the nutrients are moved to new growth," explains Australia's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. "Other nutrients such as iron, zinc, calcium and boron are immobile and are not moved around the plant, with symptoms generally occurring on the growing tips." Different deficiencies will show up in different ways, such as the following examples:

Yellowing Leaves With Green Veins

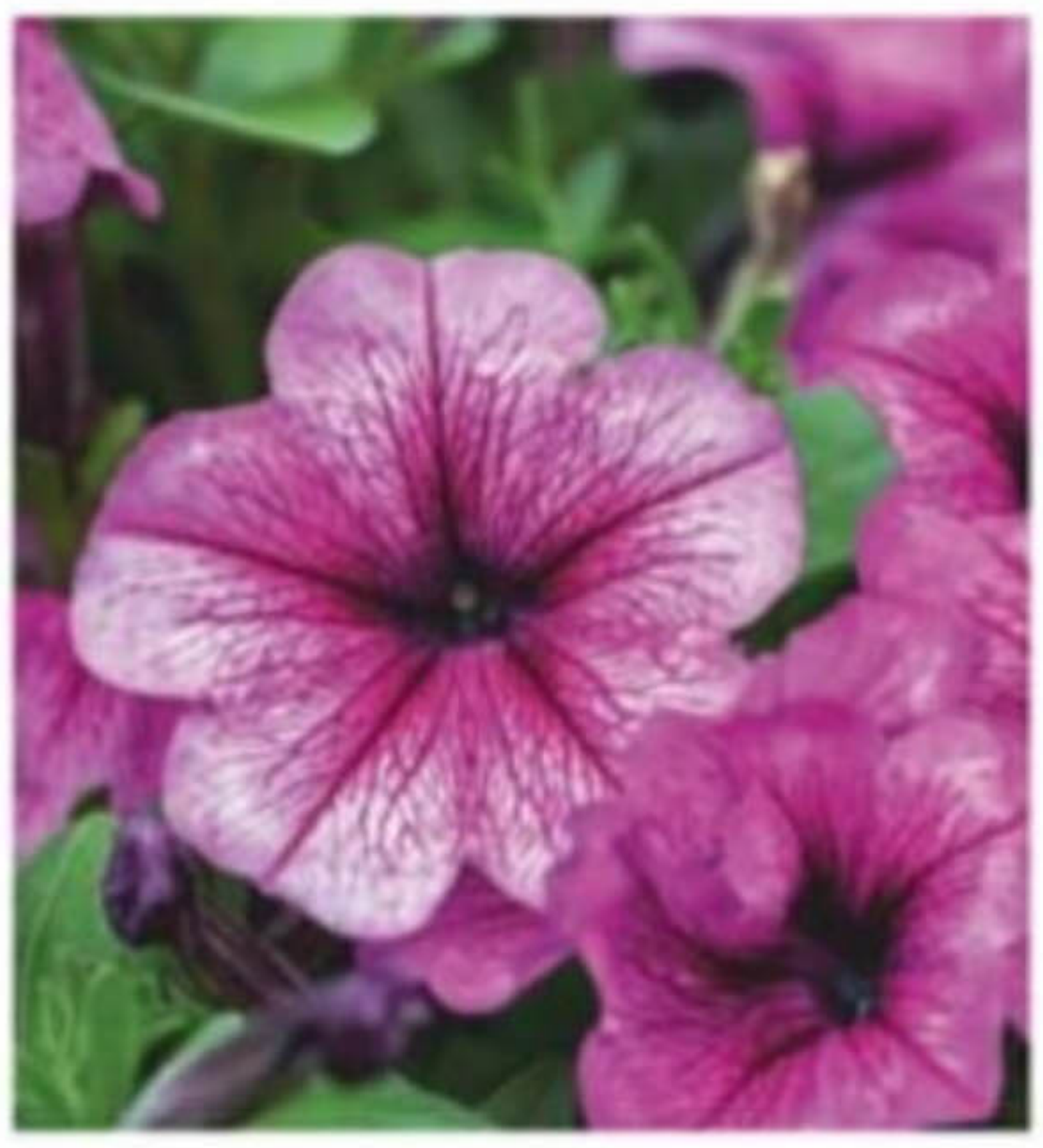
Often one of the first signs to appear (and one of the most noticeable) is yellowing leaves, while veins stay green. This symptom can indicate a lack of essential nutrients, especially nitrogen, iron, or magnesium. This may happen for other reasons too, like underwatering, overwatering, and even simply healthy old age, so look closely. If instead of green veins, the yellowing is accompanied by spots or dry edges, the culprit could be something other than a nutritional deficiency.

Leaf Discoloration and Spotting

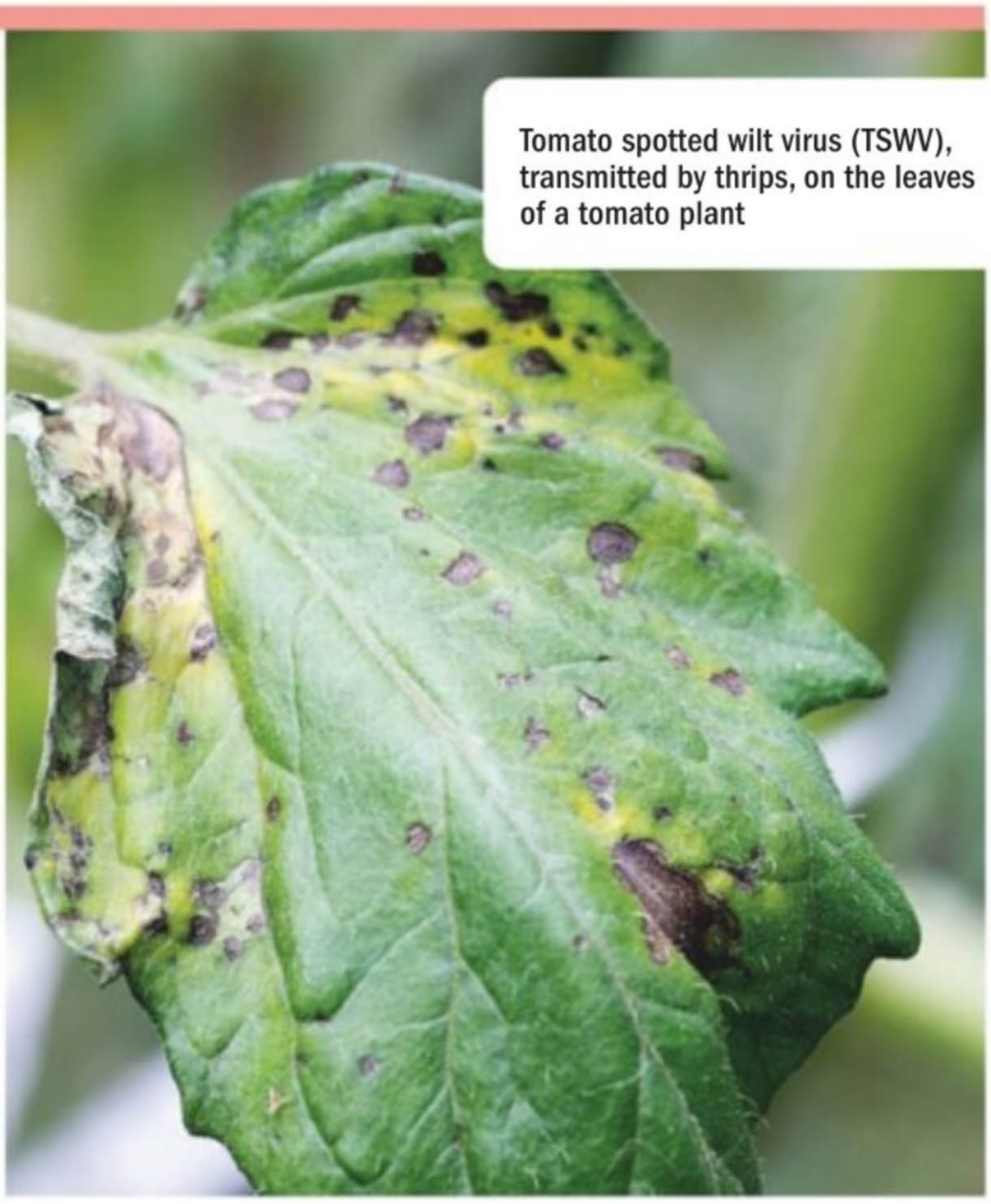
Different nutrient deficiencies can cause specific patterns of leaf discoloration and spotting. For example, zinc deficiency can cause small brown spots on the leaves, while manganese deficiency may result in pale yellow spots. Black and brown spots can be a sign of dead plant tissue.

Poor Flower Development

Potassium is important for many physiological processes of plants, such as the activation of enzymes involved in flower development, so a deficiency can result in reduced flower size, fewer flowers, or even complete failure to produce flowers. Calcium and phosphorus deficiencies are also commonly associated with poor flowering.



A healthy petunia produces copious flowers in vibrant shades



Tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV), transmitted by thrips, on the leaves of a tomato plant

Leaf Curling or Distortion

Look for curled leaf edges or inward rolling of leaves—which are possible signs of a plant lacking potassium, calcium, or magnesium.

Stunted or Delayed Growth

When garden plants lack essential nutrients, their growth and development may be lackluster compared to healthy plants. This could look like taking a long time to reach maturity and produce flowers or fruits, not growing for as long as expected, or being smaller than usual for the type of plant. Lack of nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, or potassium can also impede plant growth and development.

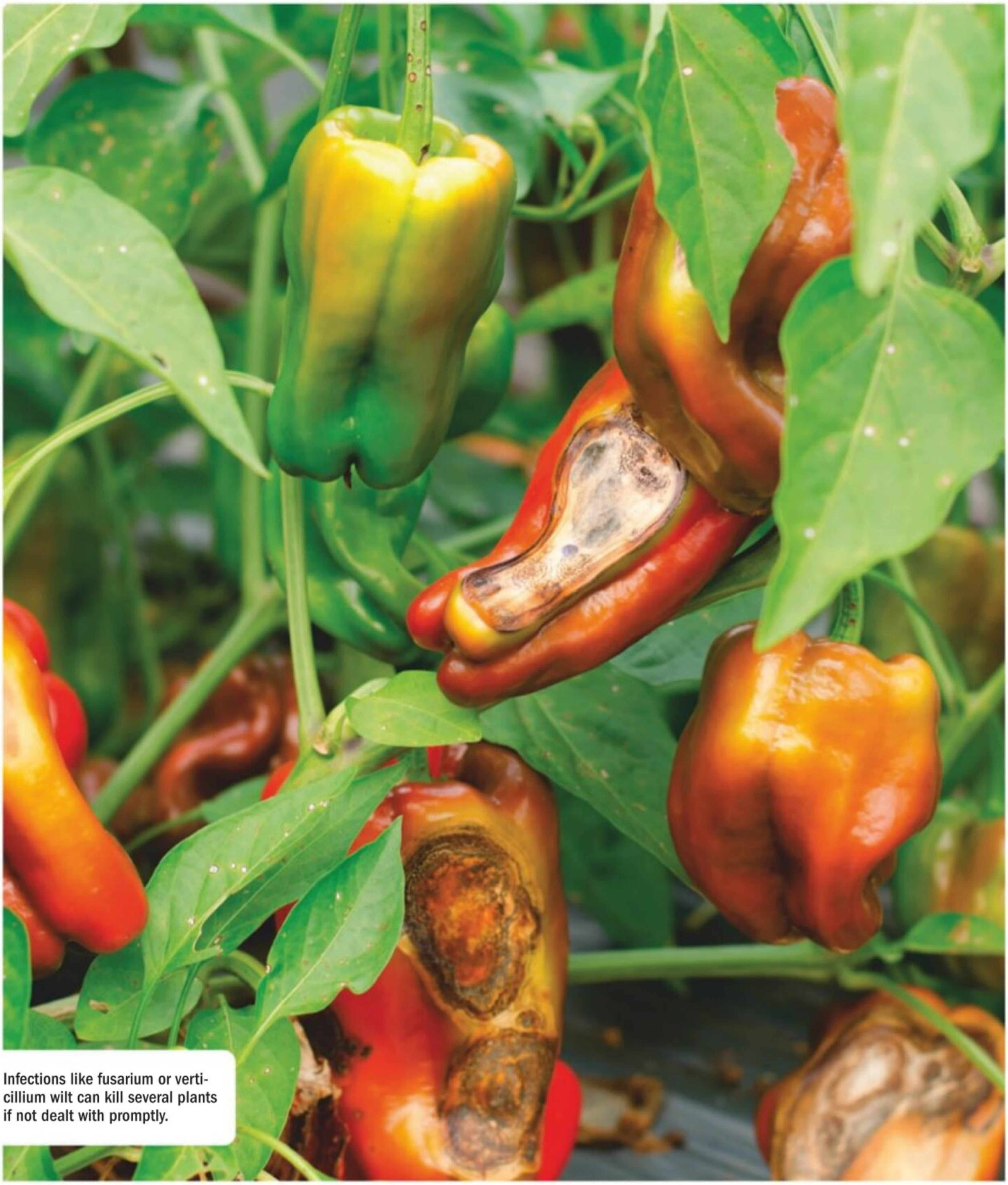
Weak Stems and Branches

Nutrient deficiencies can lead to weakened structures and branches that are prone to breakage. Inadequate calcium or boron levels, for example, can result in weak cell walls, making the plant more susceptible to damage.

These symptoms can also be caused by other factors, so it's best to conduct a soil test. "Soil test results will indicate whether the element in question is actually deficient, and will provide levels of other nutrients that could interfere with root uptake," explains arborist Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott for The Garden Professors blog. "If there's no deficiency of the nutrient in question, then adding fertilizer is not going to help! And adding fertilizer unnecessarily can create further soil nutrient imbalances." Once you have a diagnosis, your plants will be on their way to feeling their best.

Garden Rx

Learn how to spot, prevent, and treat the most prevalent diseases that can wreak havoc on your plants.



Infections like fusarium or verticillium wilt can kill several plants if not dealt with promptly.

Powdery mildew can be treated with a baking soda fungicide; see below for details.

Plants, like any other living organism, can get sick. They even have immune systems—but unlike people and animals with adaptive immune systems, plants don't remember specific pathogens through the production of antibodies; rather, they have innate immune systems that only recognize general patterns associated with pathogens. Translation: They could use a little help from you when it comes to recovering from these common plant diseases.

Powdery Mildew

A delicate dusting of white over your leaves may seem enchanting at first glance. In reality, it's a humidity-loving fungus.

Rx:

1. Prune away affected leaves and branches.
2. Mix 1 Tbsp baking soda, 1/2 tsp soap, and 1 gallon of water. Add to a spray bottle and treat your plant.
3. If that doesn't work, try store-bought fungicides.

Black Spot

Primarily affecting roses, black spot is characterized by the appearance of dark colored spots on the leaves, stems, and sometimes even the flowers—and it can live on and spread through the fallen leaves.

Rx:

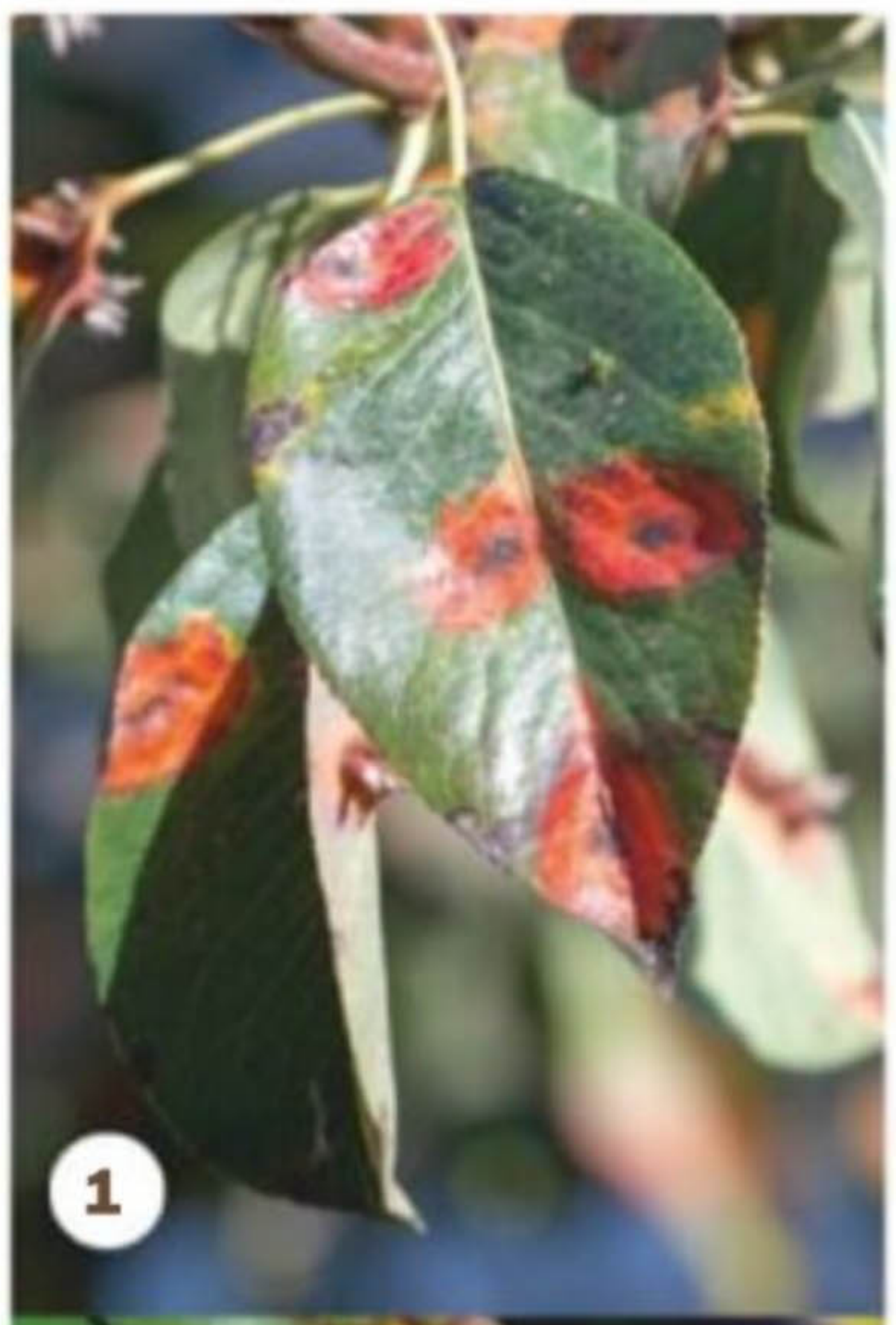
1. Ensure your roses receive at least six hours of sunlight each day.
2. Prune and dispose of infected foliage promptly, and water only at the roots.
3. Apply commercial fungicides devoted to combating black spots.

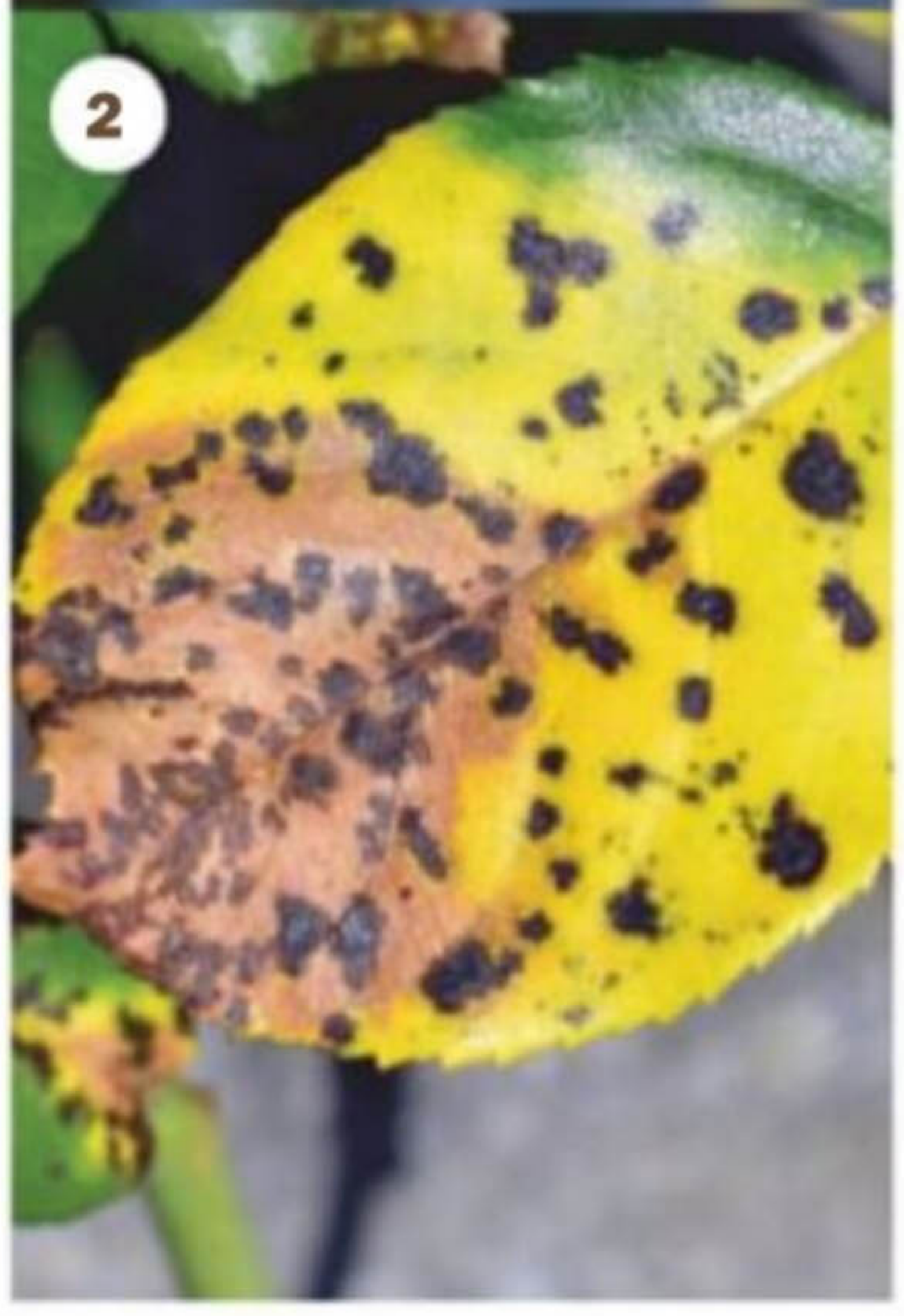
Rust

Characterized by orange or brownish-colored pustules on the undersides of leaves, rust can affect a wide range of plants, including roses, beans, and hollyhocks. Rust often thrives in humid conditions.

Rx:

1. Remove infected plant material, including leaves, stems, and fruits.
2. Improve air circulation by pruning overgrown branches and thinning out dense foliage.
3. Apply fungicides if necessary, making sure to use one labeled for rust control.





1 An infestation of pear rust on the leaves of a pear tree **2** Black spot on the leaves of a rose bush

Fusarium Wilt

This soil-borne fungus causes sudden yellowing and wilting of plant leaves, eventually leading to the whole plant's collapse. Fusarium wilt can persist in the soil for several years, so act fast if you notice symptoms.

Rx:

1. Remove the whole infected plant to avoid spreading the disease to healthy plants. Do not compost infected plants.
2. Practice crop rotation by avoiding planting any susceptible plants in the same area for at least a three year period.
3. Improve water movement through your soil and avoid overwatering, as excess moisture can promote fungal growth.

Root Rot

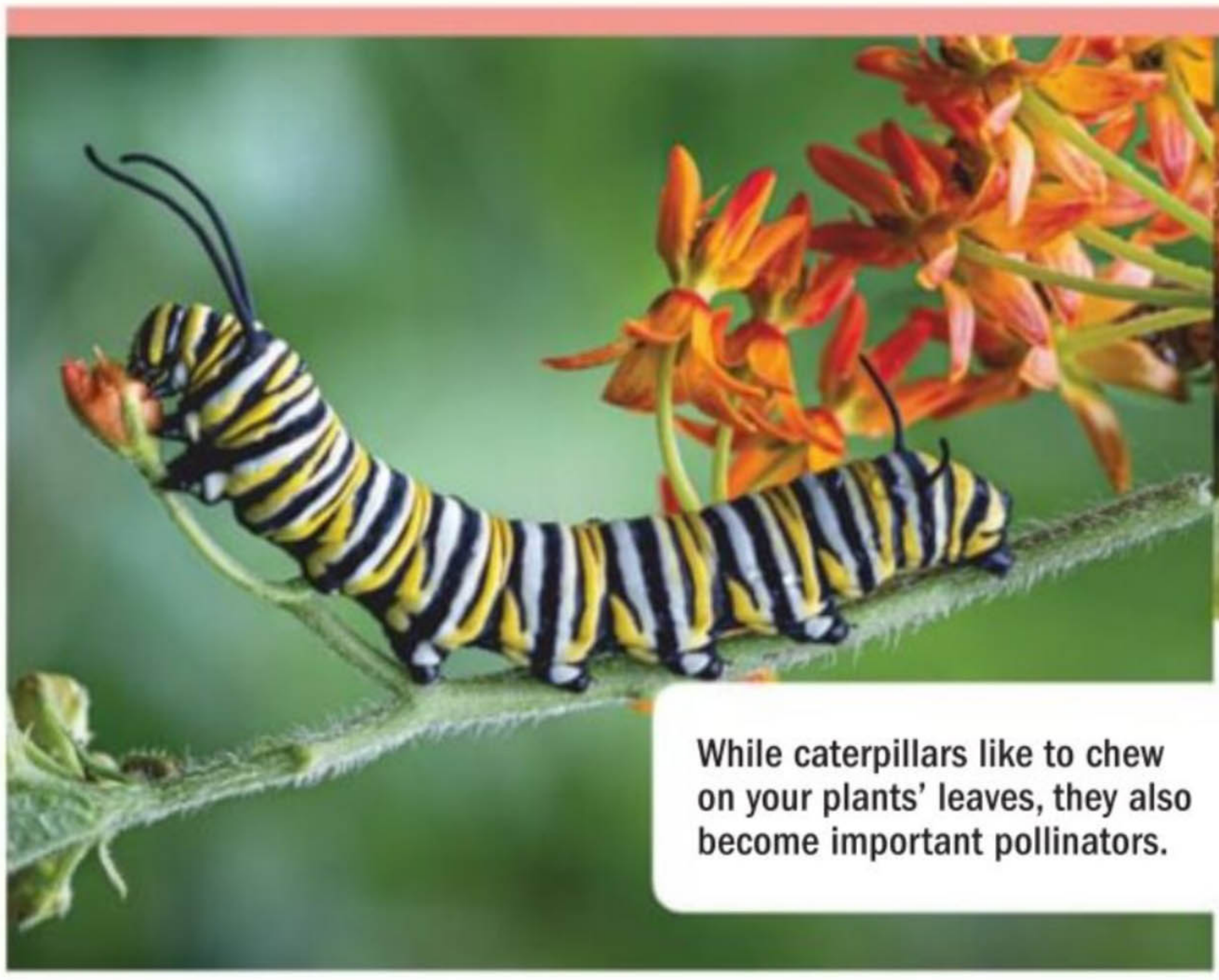
Characterized by wilting, yellowing, or browning leaves and brown, mushy, or foul-smelling roots, root rot occurs when the roots of plants are low on oxygen due to being waterlogged for long periods.

Rx:

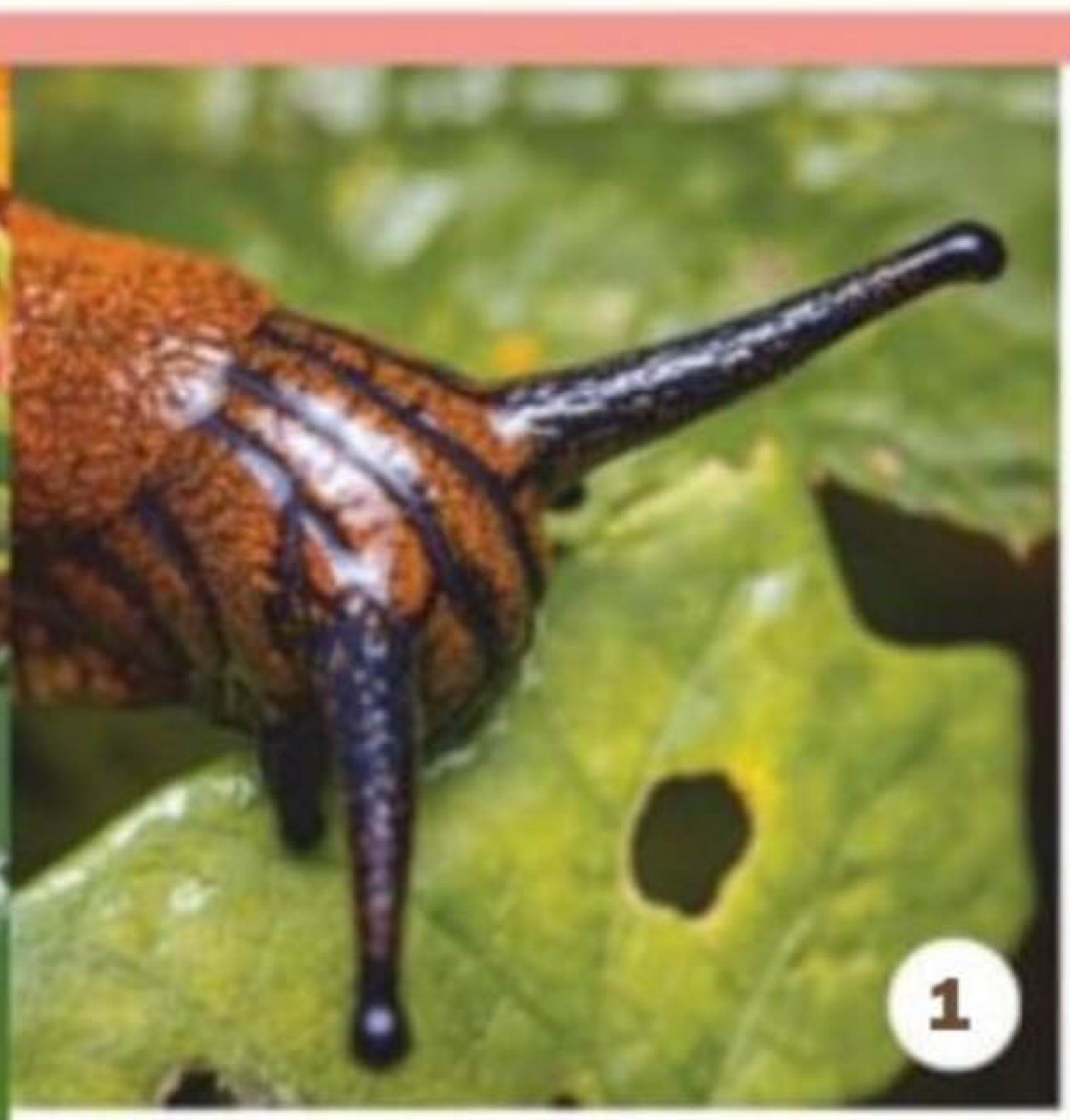
1. Remove the whole infected plant to protect your healthy plants and ensure that the root rot doesn't spread.
2. Improve soil drainage by adding organic matter to heavy clay soils, and allow the soil to fully dry out between waterings.
3. Consider using fungicides labeled for root rot control, following the instructions carefully.

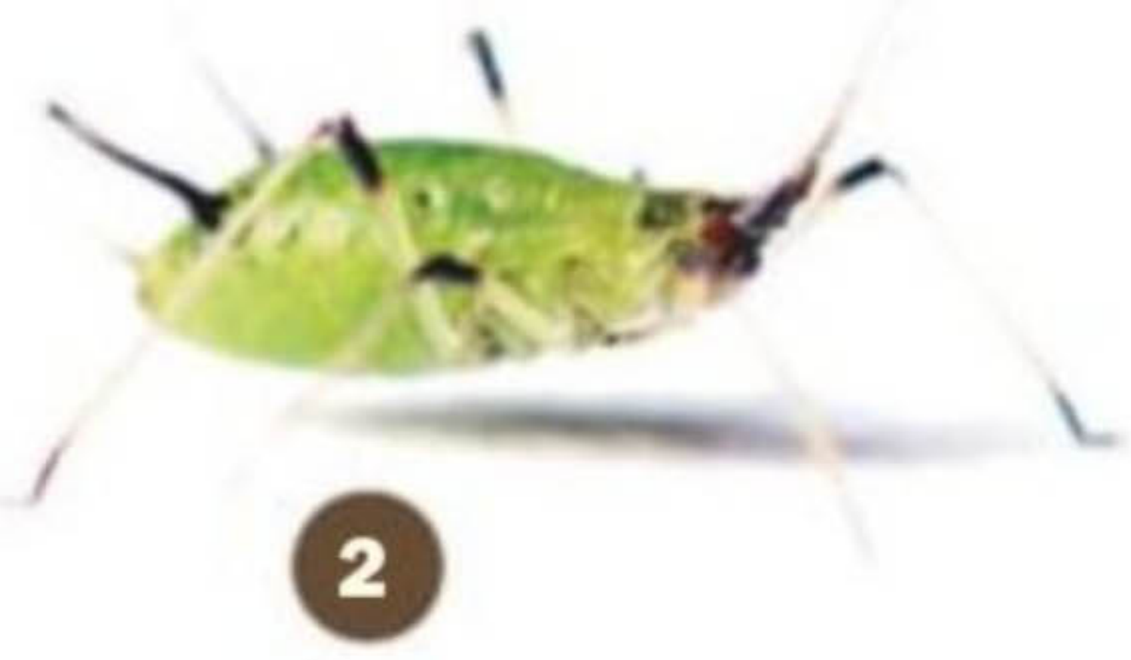
What's Eating Your Plants?

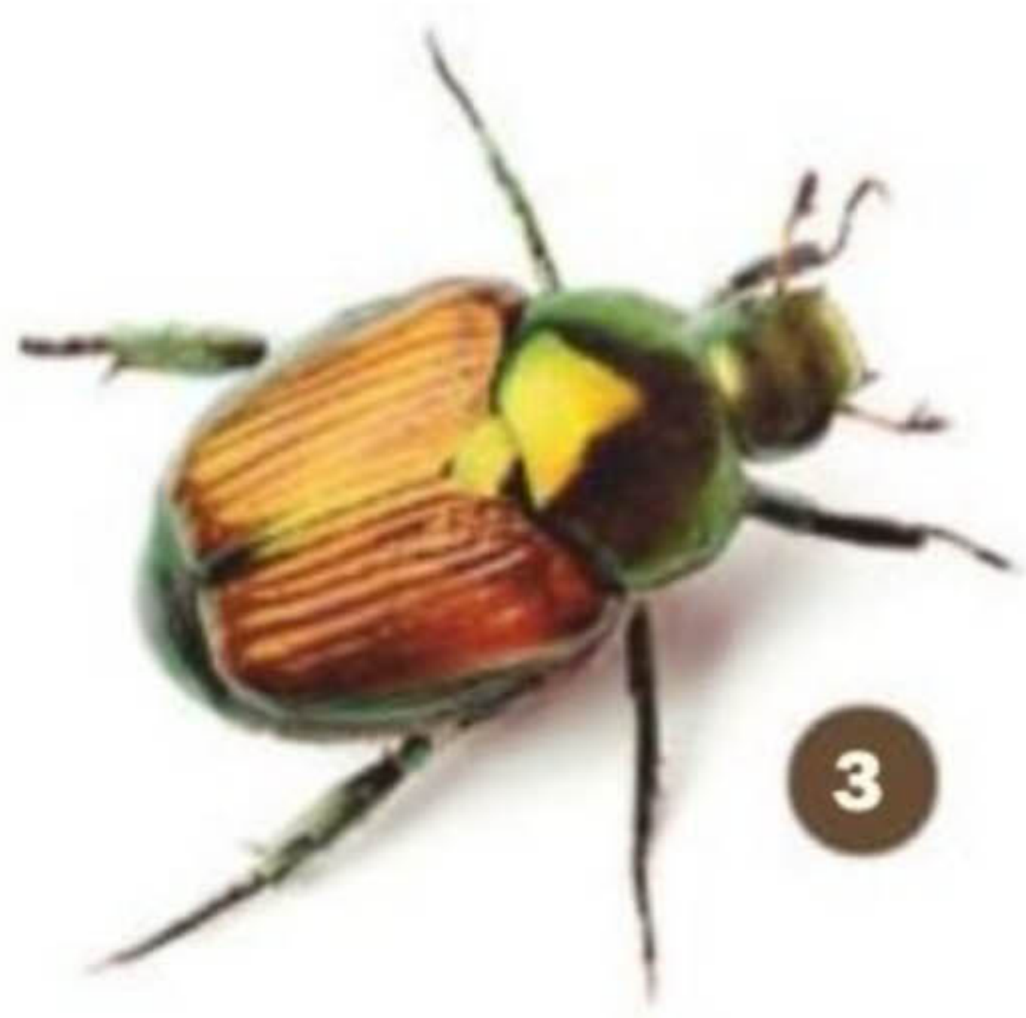
Identify and outsmart the pesky pests in your backyard.



While caterpillars like to chew on your plants' leaves, they also become important pollinators.







1 Red slugs, **2** aphids, and **3** Japanese beetles can all do serious damage to your garden's plants if their numbers grow unchecked—make sure you manage them properly before they become a problem.

As you care for your plants, you may come across a few uninvited guests at times. From rabbits nibbling on your lettuce to deer feasting on your flowers, some animals can wreak havoc on your garden. After all, a garden is not just a sanctuary for plants; it's a haven for wildlife too.

It can be disheartening to see your hard work destroyed, to say the least. Pests not only damage plants, but they can also disrupt the delicate ecosystem of your garden. Harmful insects can pass pathogens to your plants and soil which leads to disease, while large animals like deer can eat their way through your garden, trampling other plants along the way. Taking action ASAP is key to preventing extensive damage.

Pest Patrol

The first step to protect your garden from pests is knowing who you're dealing with. But some pests are not easily visible (especially smaller ones like aphids or spider mites), while some are active at night or hide in hard-to-reach areas during the day. As you tend to your plants day to day, make a habit of keeping an eye out for clues that reveal the presence of sneaky garden pests. With some practice and a little patience for careful observation, you'll be able to spot telltale signs of pest trouble in seconds. "It really starts with the idea of normality," Dr. Clifford Sadof, an entomology professor at Purdue University, told *The New York Times*. "What's drawing your attention to your plant—what's abnormal about it, or unusual? If you know what the plant should look like, you have a better chance of recognizing that something is not right." Need a little help getting started? Here's who to look out for—and the clues they leave behind.

BUGS

Insects can be both friends and foes. While some, like bees, are essential for plant reproduction, others are bad news. Check your garden regularly for chewed or damaged leaves with irregular holes or ragged edges. Some bugs chew on different parts of plants, which can also cause discoloration, wilting, leaf curling, browning, or decay.

Caterpillars: While they may turn into beautiful (and beneficial) butterflies, caterpillars feast on foliage in their youth. Keep an eye out for clusters of tiny eggs laid by butterflies or moths on the undersides of leaves or other plant surfaces. These eggs will hatch into caterpillars. Some caterpillars spin silk threads as they move around plants, which may be visible on leaves and stems.

Aphids: Watch out for these tiny insects; they can quickly multiply, causing damage by sucking sap from sensitive leaves and stems. Trying to spot them? Look for clusters of tiny, pear-shaped insects on the leaves, stems, and buds of plants. They can be green, yellow, brown, black, or even pink in color. Aphids also secrete a sugary substance as they feed on plant sap, leaving a sticky residue on leaves and stems.

Slugs and Snails: These slow-moving slimeballs love to munch on plant leaves and stems. If you spot vegetables or fruit touching the ground that looks to have been chewed into from underneath, that's a telltale sign of a slug snack.

Beetles: Their larvae can destroy roots while adult beetles dine on your plants' leaves. Skeletonized leaves, with only the veins intact, are usually the work of beetles.

! Giant African land snails are massive—adults can grow to about eight inches in length and five inches in diameter.

Birds love fruit, so if you have a fruit orchard, make sure to have a plan for protecting your crop.

Rabbits love to feast on veggies; make sure you have cages up to protect your plants.

BIRDS

Many birds can be great for a garden, as they feed on problematic pests like worms and rodents and are natural pollinators. Others are less helpful. If you spot holes in fruit, birds may be the culprits.

House Sparrows: These common pests can cause damage by pecking at fruits, vegetables, and seedlings. They may also displace other bird species from nesting areas or bird feeders.

Pigeons: With a strong appetite, pigeons can consume significant amounts of crops, including grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Starlings: These birds often gather in large flocks and as a result can cause damage en masse to crops such as cherries, grapes, and berries by pecking at the fruit.

Crows: These highly intelligent birds may dig up newly planted seeds or seedlings, feed on fruits and vegetables, or disturb garbage bins in search of food.

RODENTS

While many rodents "live and let live"—some even contribute to the ecosystem—others can be considered pests.

Mice: These critters help themselves to a variety of plant material, including seeds, bulbs, roots, and young shoots.

Groundhogs/Woodchucks: These herbivorous rodents can cause extensive damage to gardens by eating a wide range of plants and digging deep burrows through the ground.

Squirrels: While squirrels are not exclusively garden pests, they can become problematic when they raid bird feeders or dig up newly planted bulbs or seeds. These furry acrobats might be responsible for small holes in the ground or missing bulbs.

MAMMALS

Don't trust their cute faces—these animals will make a mess of your garden.

Rabbits: Notorious for their love of tender young plants, rabbits can quickly obliterate a vegetable patch if left unchecked. Watch out for signs like clipping damage to young plants at ground level.

Raccoons: Their dexterous paws come in handy as they rummage through your garden in search of food. Look for newly planted bulbs dug up and pushed aside.

Deer: These beautiful creatures have big appetites—they can devour a wide range of plants, including flowers, shrubs, vegetables, and even trees. They particularly enjoy tender shoots and leaves. Look for nibbled leaves and torn twigs on taller plants, clean snips on herbaceous plants, and tracks in the soil.

Both **1** squirrels and **2** raccoons have quick, aglie hands very capable of digging up your newly-planted veggies; be on the lookout for signs of unwanted visits.

Marmots and groundhogs love to feast on your garden veggies. Keep an eye out!

Reclaim Your Garden

Got pests? Don't panic—though there are plenty of critters that want to make themselves at home in your garden, there are also many ways to give them the boot. From natural remedies to innovative gadgets, these pest control methods can help you regain control of your garden.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Sometimes, stopping pests in their tracks is the most effective way to shield your plants.

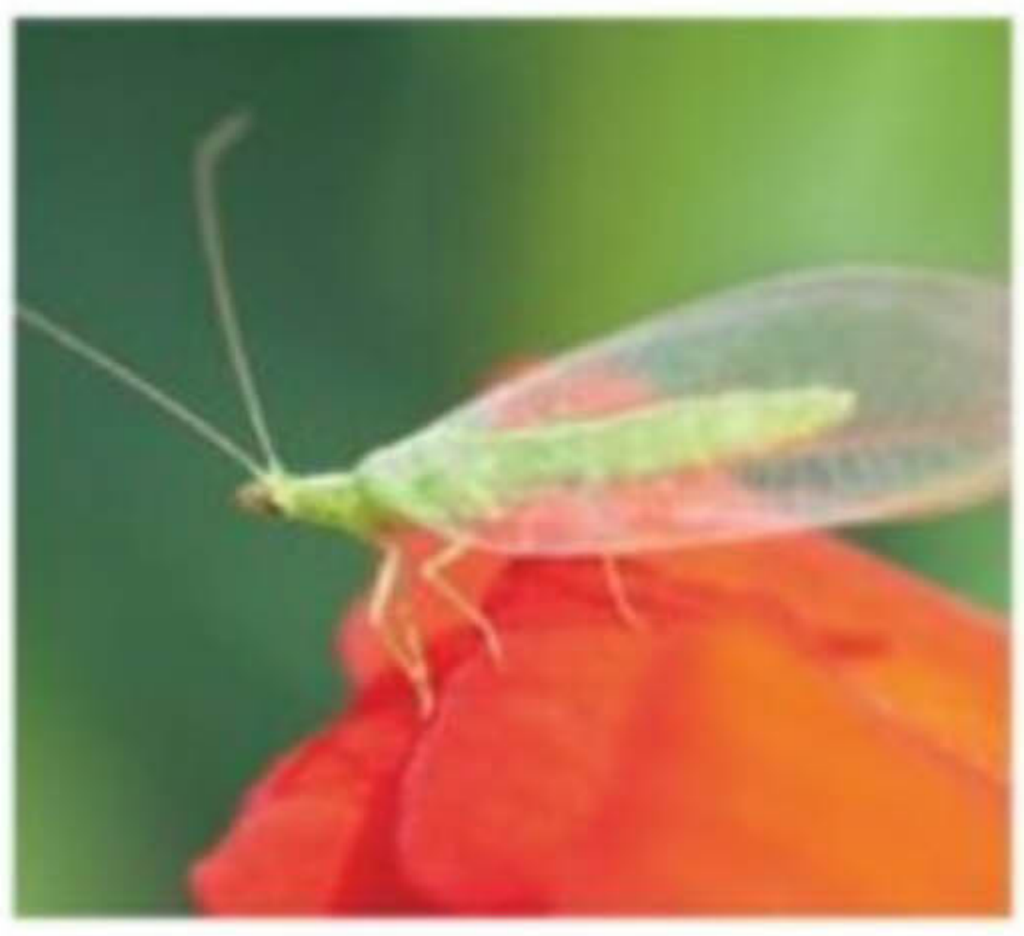
- For deer, installing tall fencing (at least seven feet) made from durable materials like metal or wood is a useful way to prevent visits.
- For rabbits, try a chicken wire fence. Two to three feet tall will work for most, although persistent rabbits may try to burrow underneath. To deter them, dig a trench to extend the fence about a foot underground.
- For smaller rodents, use hard wire mesh or rodent-proof materials to cover the garden bed's perimeter.
- For birds, you can install a chicken wire cage over your plants (if the area is small enough) or use netting to keep winged invaders at bay.

You can pick up wire netting, such as the kind pictured here, inexpensively from your local garden or hardware store.

Bug Buds

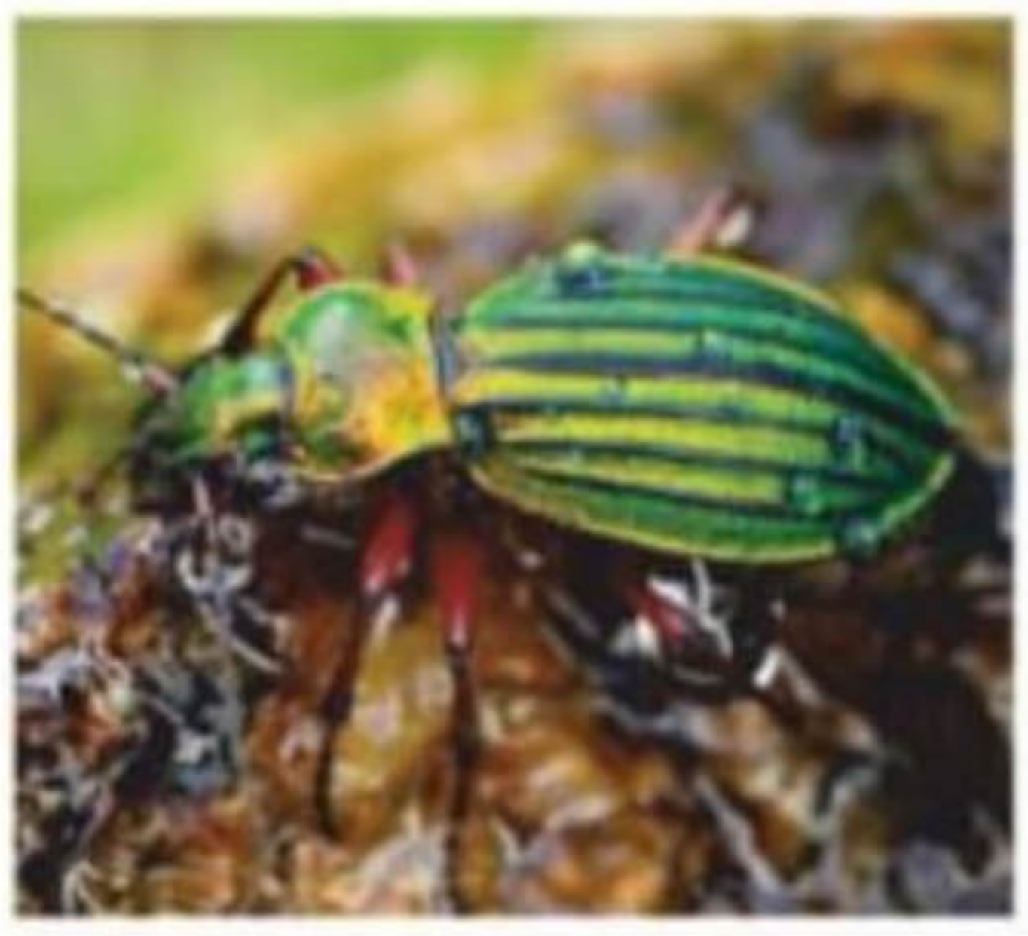
Don't squish that bug! Insects can also be a gardener's best friend, as many will consume garden pests before they can harm your plants. Attract these pest-eating insects to your garden with plants that offer food, shelter, and water, and let them do their thing.

1. Ladybugs: Voracious predators of aphids, mealybugs, mites, and other soft-bodied insects, a ladybug can consume hundreds of pests in a single day.

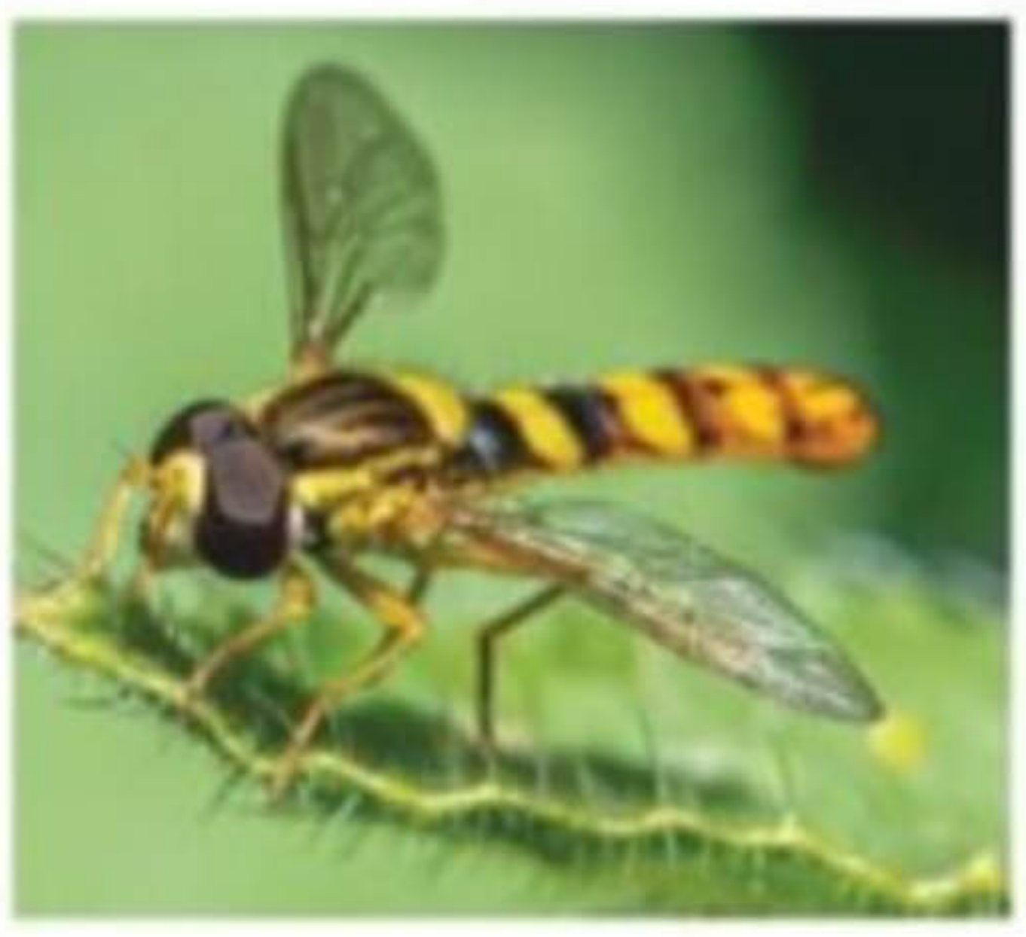


2. Lacewings: These helpful, delicate looking insects actually love to feast on aphids, caterpillars, thrips, and other small, destructive bugs.

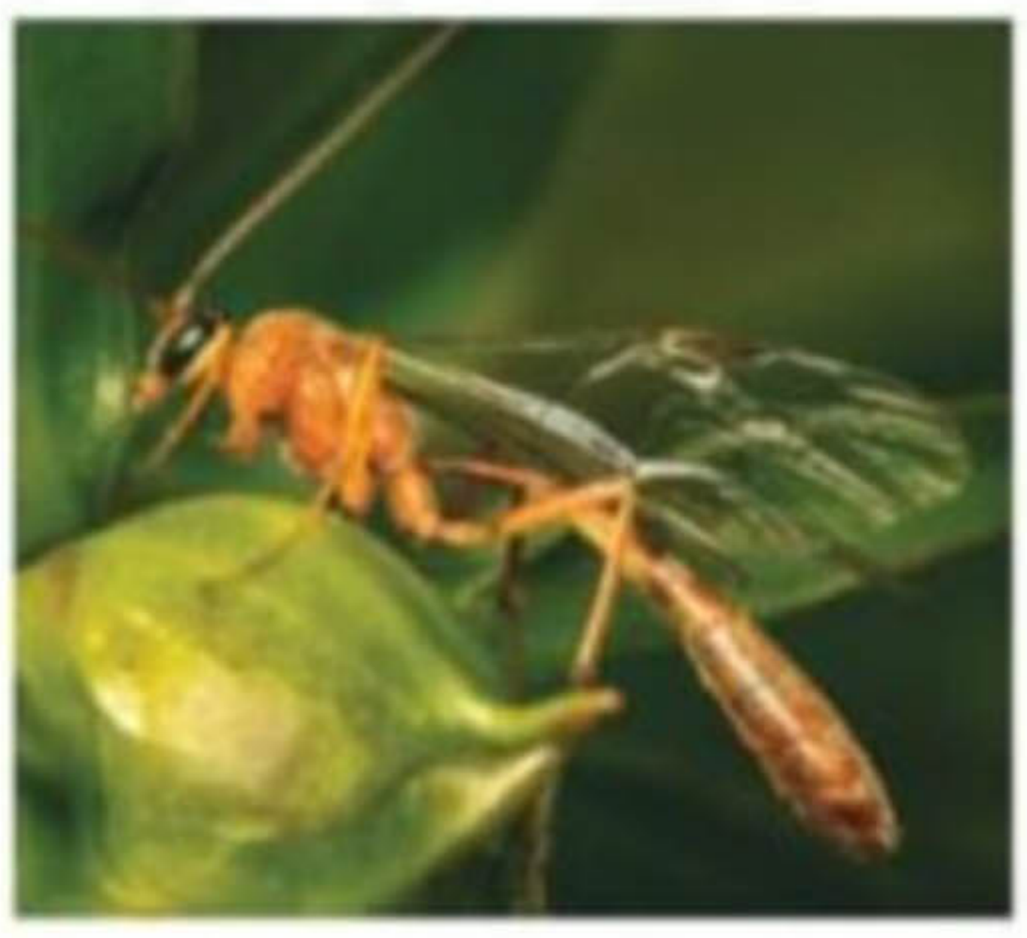
3. Praying Mantis: This fascinating long-limbed predator feeds on a range of insects, including beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, and even small spiders.



4. Ground Beetles: These nocturnal and colorful insects regularly prey on larger slugs, snails, caterpillars, and other destructive garden pests.



5. Hoverflies: This bug's larvae feed on aphids and other soft-bodied insects, keeping their populations down, while the adult flies are also a great help with plant pollination.



6. Parasitic Wasps: Various parasitic wasp species lay their eggs inside or on pests like aphids, caterpillars, and whiteflies. The wasp larvae then consume the pest from the inside.

1 Installing birdbaths is a great way to lure birds to another area of your yard. **2** Sprinkling spicy pepper grounds may deter some pests from entering your garden space. **3** Suet feeders are another effective solution for keeping both wildlife and your plants happy.

1

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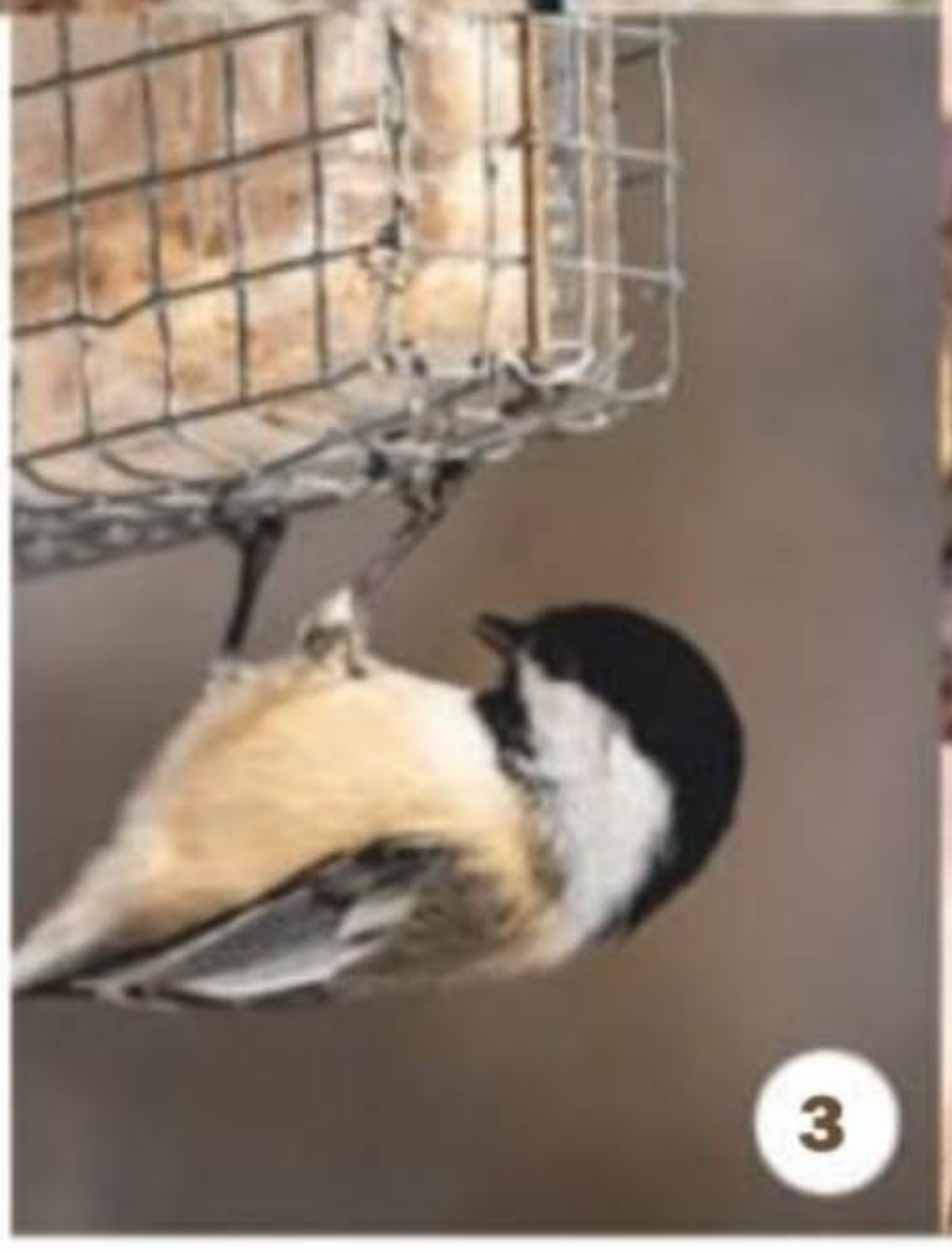

3

Decoy animals can work wonders scaring away critters as a humane form of pest control.

NATURAL REPELLANTS

You can also harness the power of Mother Nature to discourage uninvited visitors in your outdoor space.

- Planting aromatic herbs like lavender, rosemary, and lemon balm can help keep large animals away.
- Sprinkling cayenne pepper or coffee grounds around your plants can deter smaller pests like squirrels.
- Providing frogs and toads with small shelters or shallow ponds can encourage these natural insect munchers to set up shop.

SCARE TACTICS

Startling pests away can be a humane as well as effective option.

- Use motion-detecting sprinklers or reflective tape to scare unwanted visitors.
- Some animals are sensitive to certain sounds, like the high-frequency chirps produced by motion-activated devices; you can also use wind chimes, bells, or even a radio to create noise that deters pests.
- Place decoys of natural predators like owls, snakes, or hawks in your garden to create the illusion that there is a threat nearby.

ATTENTION GRABBERS

Another option is to call a truce and offer other sources of food or shelter for animals away from your garden.

- Installing bird feeders can satiate squirrels' appetites.
- Birdbaths give birds a place to preen without damaging your plants.
- Trap crops can be specifically planted to lure pests away from your main plants. For example, planting a row of lettuce that can later be easily removed can help protect your other vegetables from slugs.

Some particularly fragrant herbs (like rosemary, shown here, or lemon balm) deter animals.

Lettuce can be planted to deter critters from eating other plants.

Regular crop rotation is an important way to deter pests from setting up camp in your space.

GOOD HABITS

Stay one step ahead of destructive pests with these proactive measures.

- Regularly pruning dead leaves and overgrown branches prevents disease build-up and deprives pests of hiding spots.
- Spice up your gardening routine by rotating crops in different spots throughout the seasons. This tactic will keep insects from growing too comfortable in any one specific area.
- Water your plants in the morning. Wet soil can attract slugs, snails, and other moisture-loving pests, so by watering early in the day, your soil will dry out faster.

CHEMICAL INSECTICIDES

Chemical insecticides can be used to control specific insect pests when other methods have failed, but think of them as a last resort, rather than the first line of defense.

- Avoid using strong broad-spectrum insecticides that can do harm to some non-target organisms.
- Choose the right formula for your pest issue. Insecticides come in various formulations such as sprays, dusts, granules, or systemic treatments. Consider factors like ease of application, target area (foliage or soil), and effectiveness.
- If you're treating a vegetable crop, pay attention to the pre-harvest interval, or PHI—this is the amount of time that must occur between an insecticide application and harvesting. PHIs vary depending on the distinct insecticide and vegetable crop you're working with.

Plants That Protect

Pests treating your garden like an all-you-can-eat buffet? Grab your gloves and make room for these powerful plants that naturally repel unwanted guests.

1. Marigolds: Plant these vibrant flowers around your vegetable garden or intersperse them among other plants; their strong scent repels a wide range of harmful insects.

2. Basil: This herb's strong aroma repels flies, mosquitoes, and even some types of beetles. Planting basil near doors and windows can help keep these pests at bay.

3. Lavender: Not everyone (in the bug world) loves the scent of these beautiful purple flowers. Plant lavender near outdoor seating areas to help keep mosquitoes, flies, moths, and fleas away.

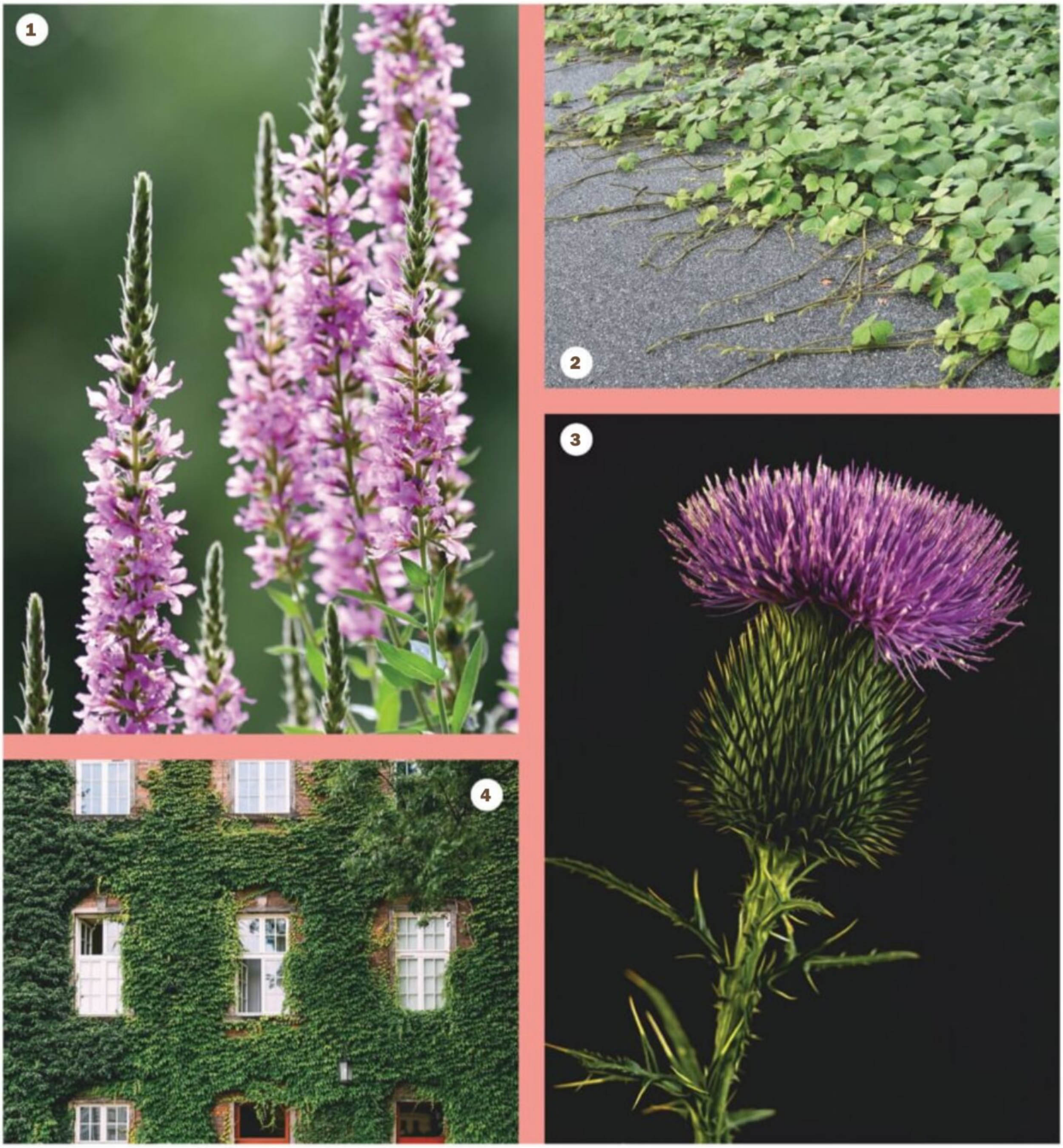
4. Mint: Ants, mosquitoes, and mice can't stand the powerful scent of this herb. Plant it around your garden to deter these critters—but be careful, as mint can spread rapidly (keeping it confined to pots solves this problem).

5. Chrysanthemums: Not only do Chrysanthemums add a burst of color to your garden, they contain a natural insecticide called pyrethrum, which repels ants, roaches, ticks, silverfish, and more. Use them as border plants to help protect your garden.

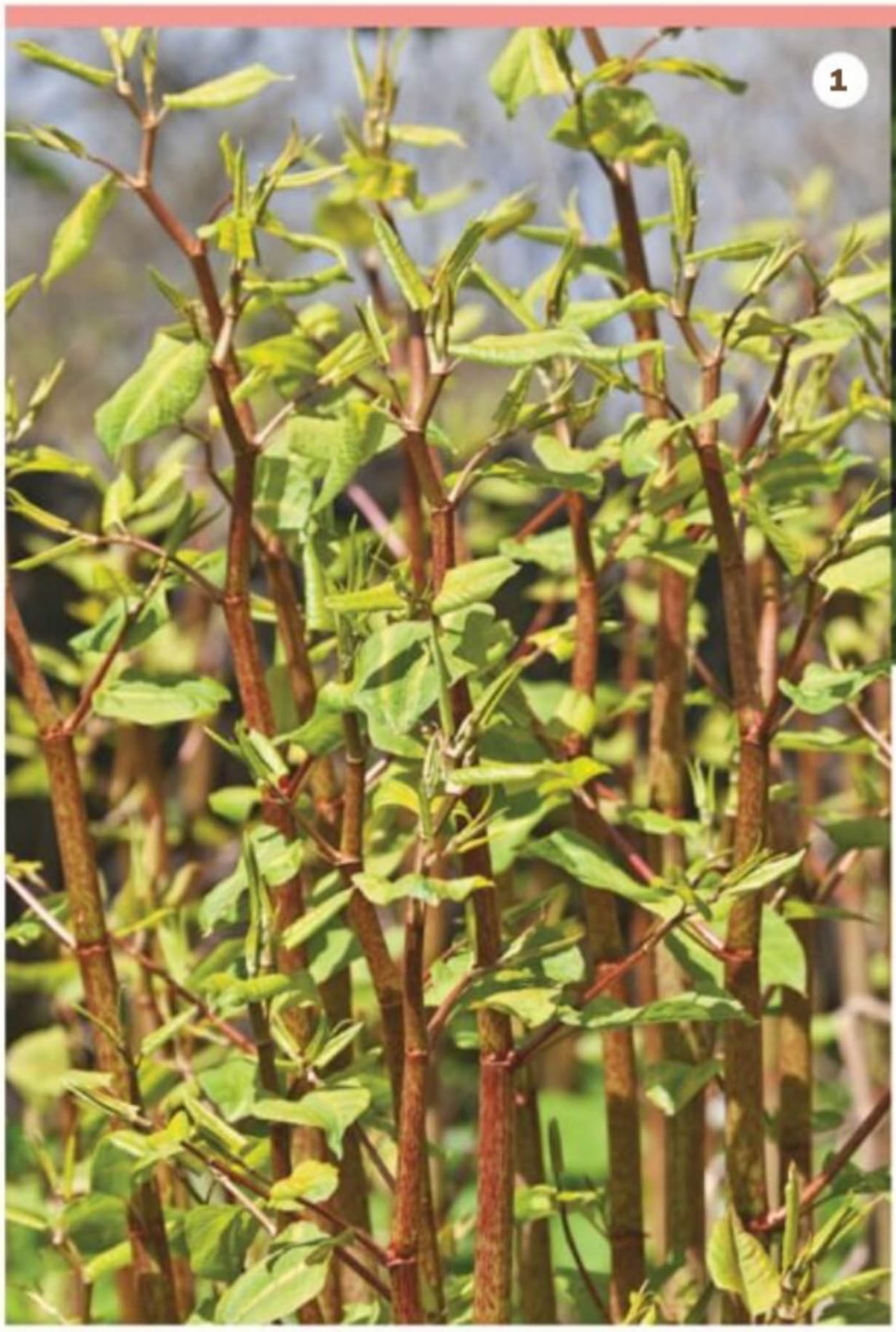
6. Rosemary: Mosquitoes, cabbage moths, and carrot flies stay away from rosemary's strong aroma—it can even repel deer.

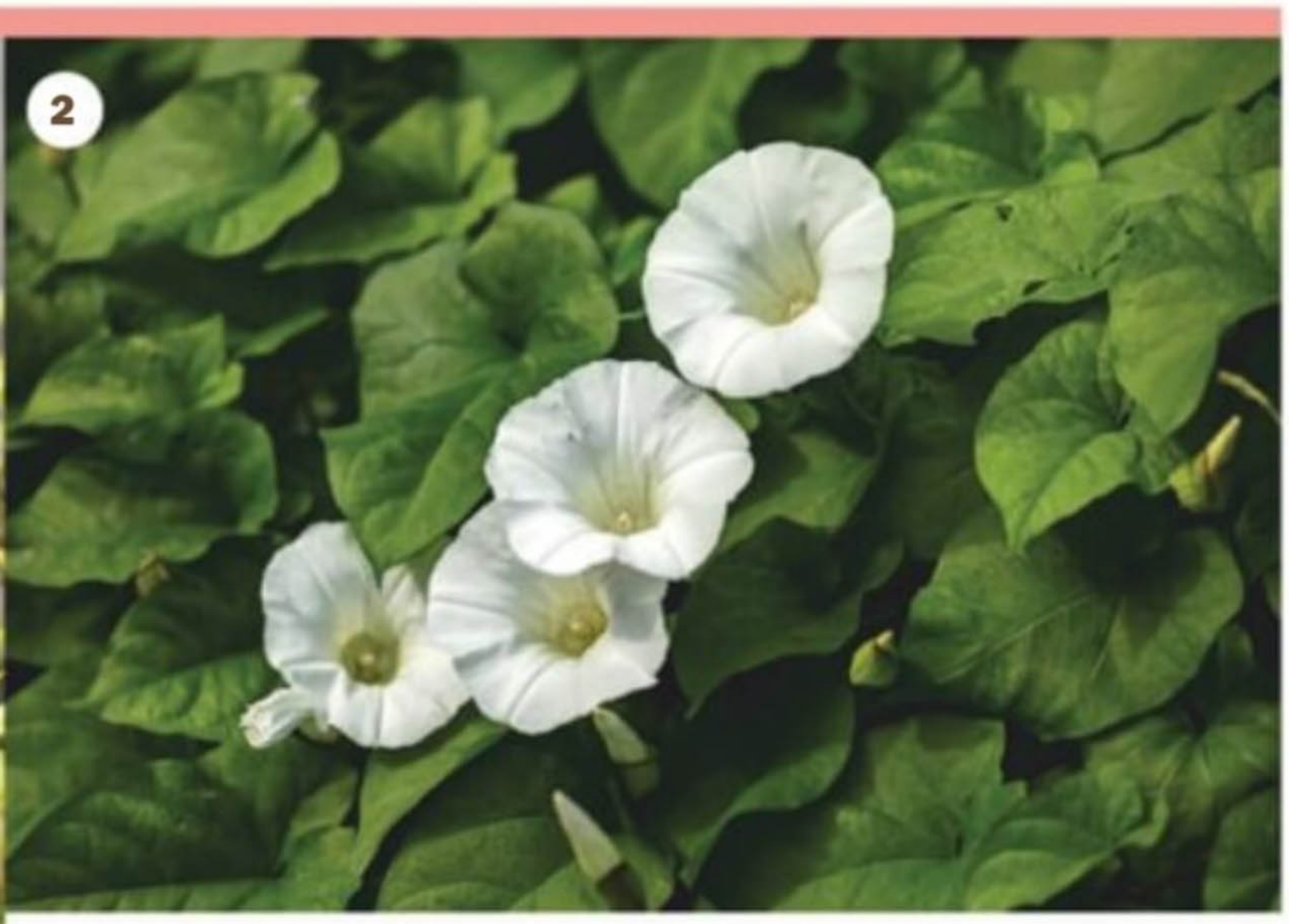
Invasive Plants

Take back your garden from these aggressive visitors.



1 Invasive purple loosestrife can clog wetland habitats. **2** Kudzu vines can grow a full foot each day. **3** Spiny garden thistle is tough to eradicate, with brown pieces of root able to generate new plants. **4** Ivy, while thought of by many as a beautiful addition to a home, can also be destructive.





1 Japanese knotweed is notoriously difficult to eradicate. **2** Hedge bindweed, also called morning glory, twists around plants for support.

While they may seem harmless or even pretty at first glance, invasive plants possess the ability to outcompete native species in your garden, disrupt natural habitats, and even threaten biodiversity.

Masters of Disguise

"An invasive plant is one that is capable of moving aggressively into a habitat and monopolizing resources such as light, nutrients, water, and space to the detriment of other species," explains the Cornell Botanic Gardens. Without natural predators, they're given free rein in gardens. And because many gardeners may not be aware of the invasive potential of certain plant species when they first introduce them into their gardens, they can take over in the blink of an eye. "While not all non-native plants are bad, some imported species are bullies that crowd out native plants and damage the diverse ecosystems that many living things depend on," horticulturist James Gagliardi explained to Smithsonian. Some common invasive plants include:

Japanese Knotweed: This plant may look like bamboo's distant cousin with sturdy stems and heart-shaped leaves, but don't be fooled. Japanese knotweed is an aggressive conqueror that can take over large areas and cause structural damage with its powerful roots.

English Ivy: This plant is a charming climber that adorns walls and trees with its lush green foliage. But behind that innocent facade lies a mischievous troublemaker; it can smother other plants and weaken structures by clinging onto them with its sticky aerial roots.

Purple Loosestrife: This vibrant purple flower can spread rapidly through its abundant seed production, disrupting wetland ecosystems and leaving chaos in its wake.

Kudzu: Able to grow up to a foot a day, this aggressive vine can quickly smother trees, buildings, and anything else in its path.

Morning Glory: Certain species of morning glory, like field bindweed, can spread and smother other plants, competing for resources and taking over garden beds.

Garden Thistle: With their height, spiky leaves and eye-catching purple or pink flowers, garden thistles may appear intriguing at first glance. But these prickly invaders can rapidly colonize garden spaces, crowding out native plants.

Fighting Back

Reclaim your garden by regularly looking for any signs of invasion and swiftly removing any intruders. The sooner you catch them, the easier they are to control. For smaller infestations, physically uproot or trim back those unwanted invaders. Make sure to remove the entire plant, including the roots, for an effective treatment. For ground-covering invasive plants, smothering can be a useful method: Cover the affected area with a thick layer of mulch or cardboard and leave it in place for several months to deprive the plants of sunlight and nutrients. But when all else fails, herbicides may be necessary. Selective herbicides that target specific plant species are preferred over broad-spectrum ones that can harm beneficial plants.

Going Natural

Alternatives to chemical treatments that actually work

Making homemade insecticides and fungicides saves you money; they're also better for the planet.

Key ingredients for natural garden remedies: **1** spray bottle to apply homemade treatments, **2** baking soda, **3** liquid dish soap, **4** distilled white vinegar, **5** fresh garlic cloves, **6** egg shells, and **7** rich compost to make a nutritious tea to feed your plants.

By avoiding chemical treatments in your garden, you can create a thriving ecosystem where beneficial insects thrive, soil quality improves, and plants develop stronger natural defenses.

The Dark Side of Chemicals

Chemical treatments have long been used in home gardens for their effectiveness in controlling pests and diseases; they often provide quick results and can be highly targeted. But they come with drawbacks. Continuous use of chemical treatments and fertilizers can deplete the soil of essential nutrients, resulting in long-term damage to the soil's fertility and structure.

They can also harm beneficial organisms such as pollinators (bees, butterflies) and natural predators (ladybugs, spiders) that help control pests naturally. Use them too often and your garden's pests and weeds may also become less susceptible to the chemicals used, requiring higher concentrations or more potent formulations to achieve the desired effect. Paradoxically, chemical pest control can lead to an increase in pests over time.

Honeybees are pollinators that help the overall health of your garden—so if you see them buzzing around, that's a sign to celebrate!

Natural Recipes

Let Mother Nature be your guide with these homemade treatments. Remember to always test any homemade solution on a small area of your plants before applying it extensively, and enjoy taking care of your garden the natural way!

Baking soda fungicide: Mix 1 tablespoon of baking soda, 2.5 tablespoons of cooking oil, and a few drops of liquid soap into a gallon of water. Spray onto affected plants every two weeks.

Garlic spray pest control: Blend 10-15 cloves of fresh garlic with two cups water, then strain and mix with a quart of water and 1 tablespoon of dish soap. Apply to the affected areas using a spray bottle.

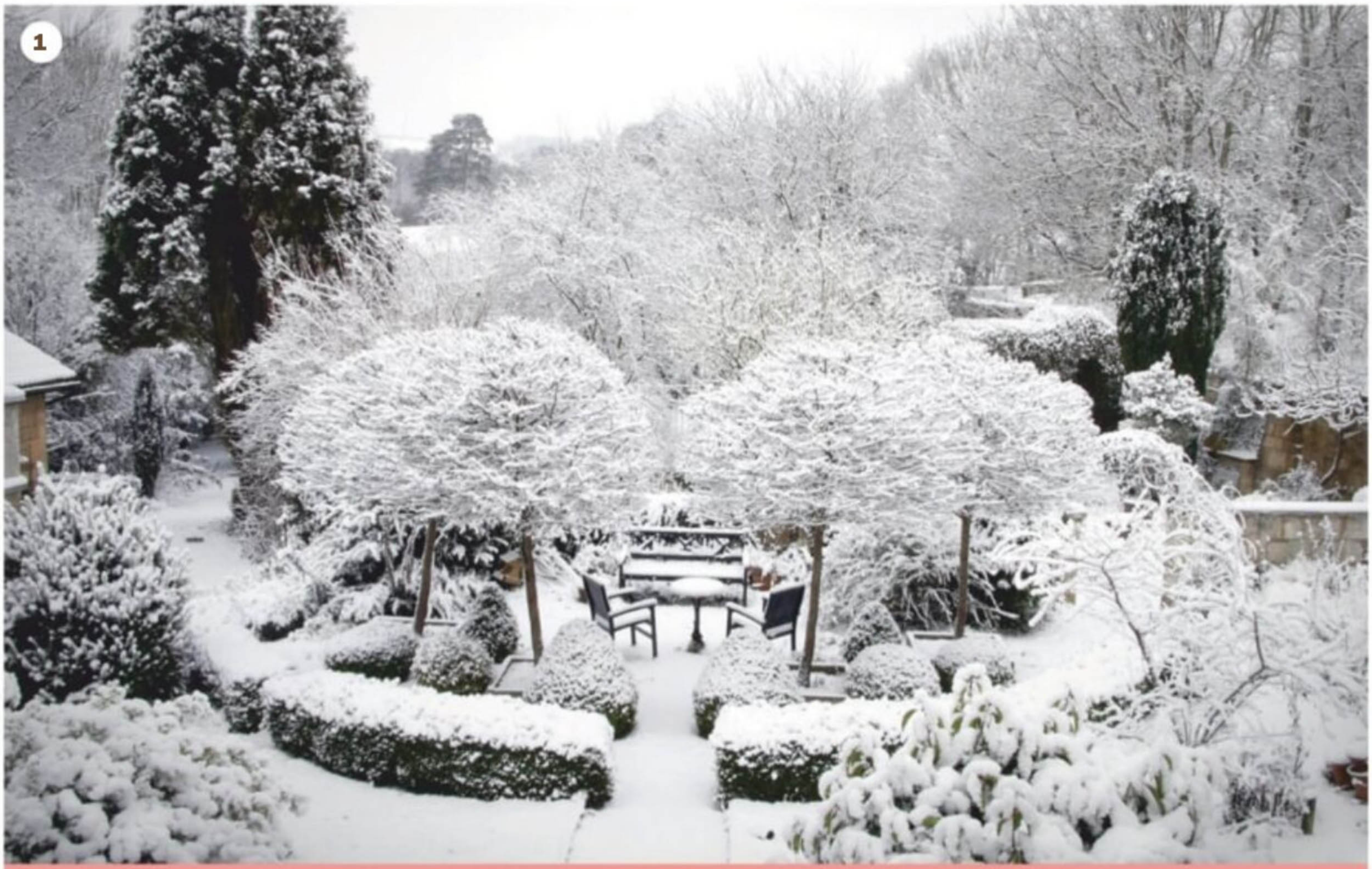
Compost tea fertilizer: Fill a large container (like a garbage can) with one part aged compost and eight parts water. Let the mix sit for at least a week, stirring occasionally. When you're ready to use it, pour some into a watering can, diluting it with clean water until the mixture is light brown. Pour a cup of the compost tea around the base of plants, or spray it on the leaves of the plants. You can repeat this treatment every two weeks.

Vinegar weed killer: Mix 1 gallon of white vinegar, 1 cup of salt, and 1.5 tablespoons of liquid dish soap in a large container until the salt is dissolved. Transfer the solution to a spray bottle and spray the mixture directly onto weeds. Be cautious as this solution can also kill or damage nearby plants, so use it selectively and avoid spraying on windy days.

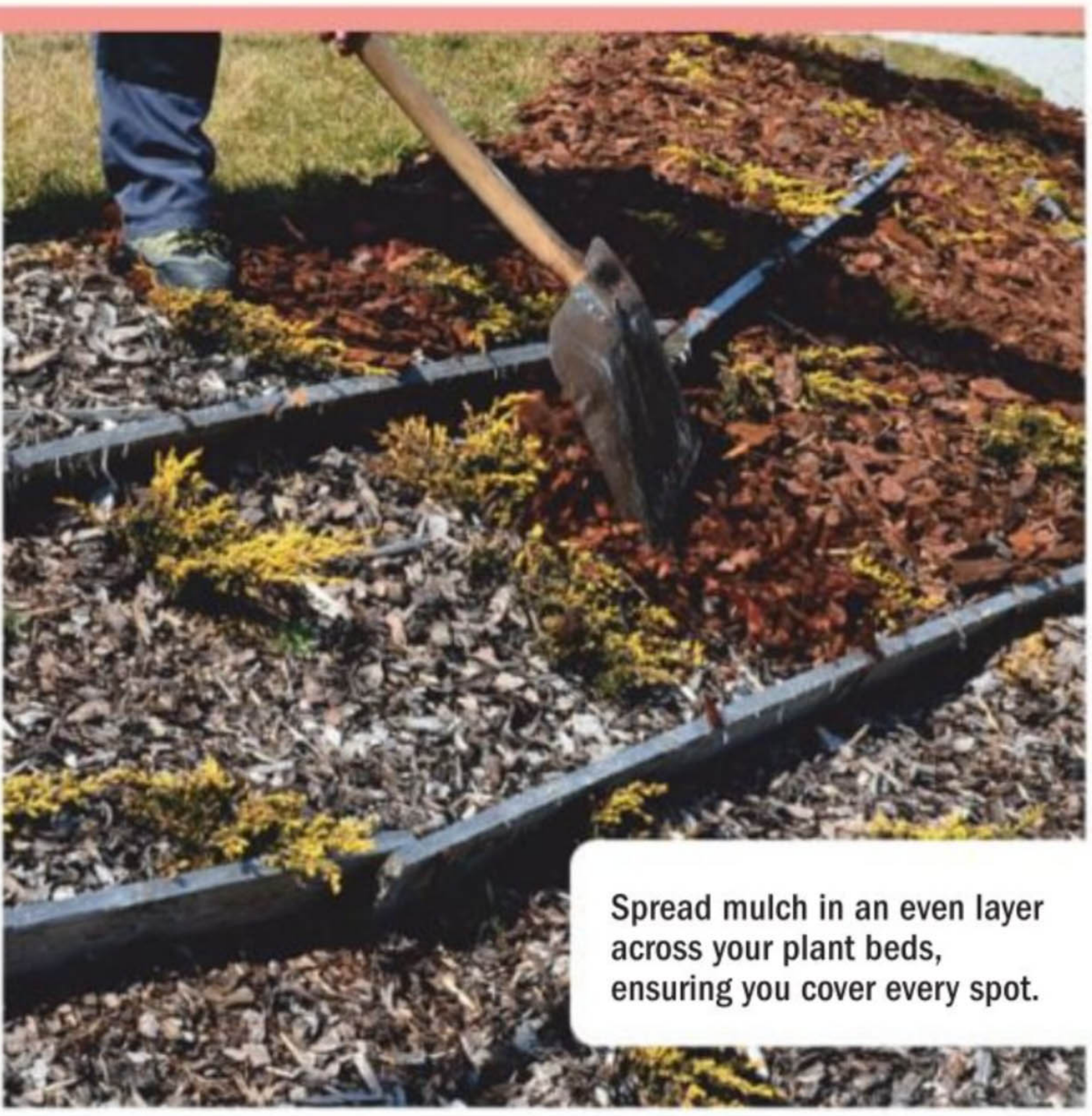
Eggshell calcium boost: Collect eggshells and rinse them thoroughly to remove any residue, then allow them to dry completely. Once dry, crush the dried eggshells into small pieces using a mortar and pestle or a blender. Sprinkle the shells around plants that require calcium, such as tomatoes or peppers, gently working it into the soil around the base of the plants.

Winterize Your Garden

A few strategies to protect your plants and help them prosper even after frost and cold



1 Snow can weigh down the branches and leaves of plants in your garden; make sure you take precautions to prevent extensive damage. **2** Consider a mobile greenhouse for plants that would benefit from extra protection. **3** Prep other parts of your space, like fences, to ensure they're ready for winter.


Spread mulch in an even layer across your plant beds, ensuring you cover every spot.

When temperatures drop and frosty mornings become more frequent, it's time to start preparing our beloved gardens for the colder months ahead. Winterizing your home garden is essential for protecting your plants so your little patch of paradise blossoms come springtime.

Create a winter wonderland for your plants with these strategies:

1. MULCHING FOR INSULATION AND PROTECTION:

Mulching is an essential step in preparing your garden for winter. It provides insulation and protection against extreme temperatures, helps retain moisture in the soil, suppresses weed growth, and prevents soil erosion. Here's how to do it effectively:

- Apply a layer of organic mulch, comprised of materials like wood chips or straw, around the base of trees, shrubs, and perennials. Make sure the mulch is around two to four inches thick.
- Leave a small, few-inch gap around the plant's stem to avoid any moisture buildup that can lead to rot or disease.
- Replenish the mulch as needed throughout the winter months to maintain its effectiveness.

2. SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PLANTS:

Certain plants are more susceptible to winter damage than others. To protect vulnerable plants like roses or delicate perennials, follow these steps:

- Before the first frost, stake or tie up plants that have a tendency to droop or bend under heavy snow or ice.
- Use stakes or plant supports to provide additional support and prevent breakage.
- Don't tie the supports too tightly, as this could lead to restricted growth and damage to the plant.

Some trees benefit from a winter covering to protect them against frost and freezing temperatures.

3. PREVENTING WATERLOGGING:

Excessive moisture can be detrimental to plants during winter. To prevent waterlogging and promote proper drainage in your garden beds:

- Ensure that your garden beds have good drainage by adding organic matter like compost or manure to your soil.
- Consider creating raised beds to improve drainage and prevent water from pooling around plant roots.
- Avoid overwatering your plants before winter sets in, as excess moisture can lead to root rot in freezing temperatures.

4. PREPARING FOR EXTREMES:

Winter weather can be unpredictable, so it's important to be prepared for extremes. A few things you can do:

- Keep frost blankets handy to cover your plants if a sudden freeze is expected. These protective covers will help insulate plants and prevent frost damage.
- Consider using cold frames or hoop houses to create a protected environment for more delicate plants. These structures provide additional insulation and shield plants from harsh winter conditions.

5. PROTECTING AGAINST WIND DAMAGE:

Strong winds can cause significant damage to your garden during winter, or during natural disaster events like hurricanes or tornadoes. To protect your plants against wind damage:

- Install windbreaks such as fences, hedges, or windbreak fabric around your garden. These barriers will help reduce the impact of strong winds on your plants.
- Secure tall or top-heavy plants with stakes or supports to prevent them from toppling over in high winds.

Get Ready to Blossom

Raise a glass to your green thumb prowess while you watch your careful planning take root!

Congratulations! You've embarked on a journey to create your very own natural oasis.

Creating a garden is part science and part art. By thoughtfully planning your garden, understanding your soil and climate, and choosing the right plants for your region, you're setting the foundation for success; by carefully arranging a canvas of small plants, trees, and shrubs, you're creating stunning visual compositions that captivate the eye and evoke a sense of harmony. And don't forget to invite pollinators into your garden by providing them with an inviting habitat—their presence will not only enhance the beauty of your garden, but will also contribute to the health of our ecosystem.

Whether it's trees, flowers, shrubs, or a vegetable garden you envision (or maybe all of the above) you're ready to get started. As you dive into the day-to-day tasks you've learned about—pruning, watering, mulching, and weeding—remember that troubleshooting is a natural part of the process. Pests, diseases, and nutritional deficiencies can pose challenges, but with your newfound knowledge and experience, you'll be able to identify and address these issues promptly.

As you begin this new adventure, you'll also come to learn firsthand that gardening is not just about growing plants; it's about nurturing a connection with the natural world—and with fellow gardeners. "Part of the bond among gardeners—part of our tradition—is to celebrate and, in turn, commiserate together," gardening author Margaret Roach wrote for *The New York Times*. "We compare outcomes in the face of common forces, for better or worse. We excitedly tell one another, 'I did it!' the first time we grow and bloom a perennial from seed that was collected in our garden and successfully winter-sown, or when we have finally harvested the first stalks of asparagus from crowns planted two springs earlier."

Now, it's time for you to have some firsts. Ready to turn your dream garden into a reality? Step outside and immerse yourself in the wonders of nature, breathe in the fragrant blooms, and get your hands dirty!

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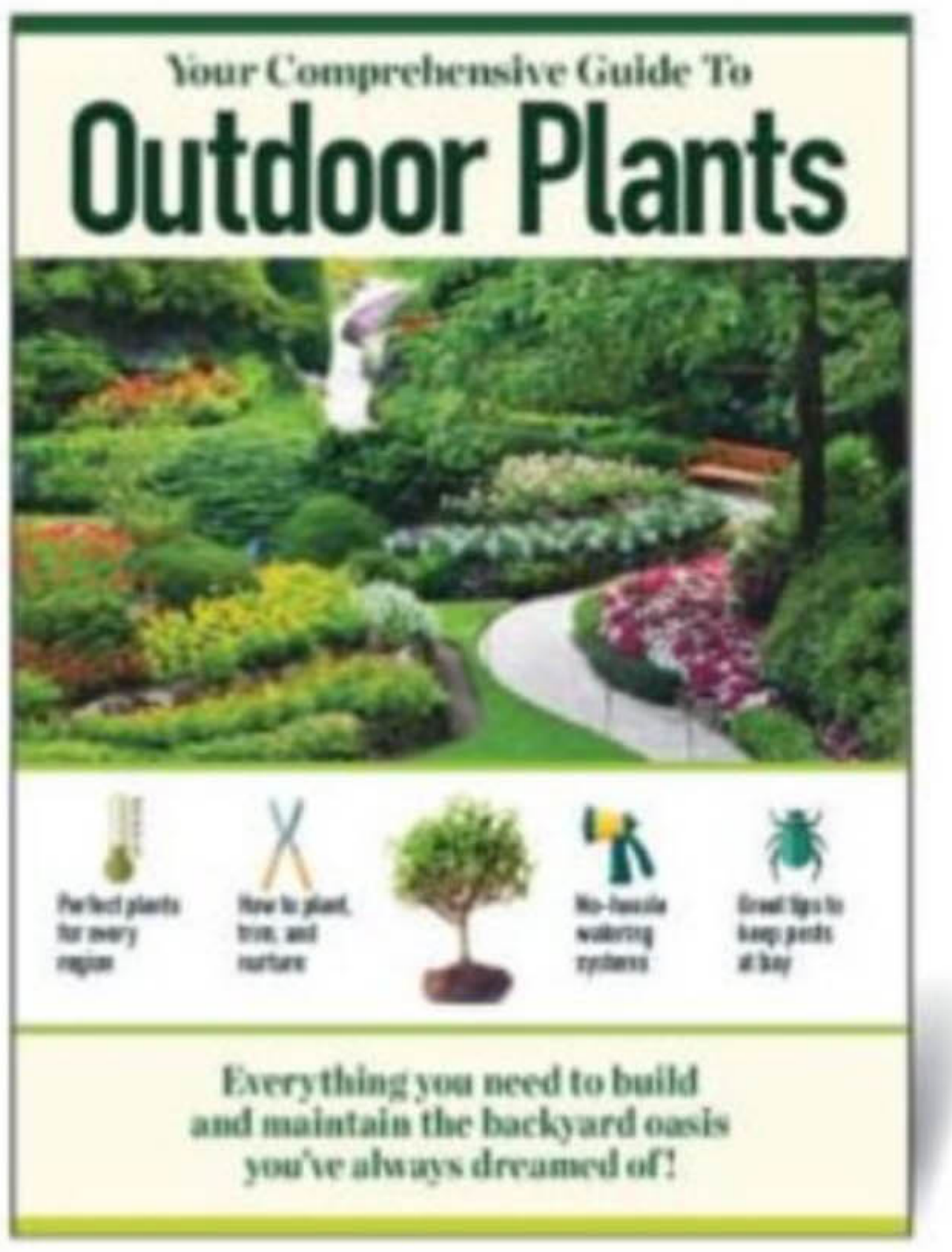
Your Comprehensive Guide To
Outdoor Plants
Everything you need to build and maintain the backyard oasis you've always dreamed of!

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PLANT PARENTING 101

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